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**Tesi Dottorale**

**From “Our Experiment” to the “Prisoner of the West”: Ghana’s  
Relations with Great Britain, the United States of America and West  
Germany during Kwame Nkrumah’s Government (1957-1966)**

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## Abbreviations

AA	<i>Auswärtiges Amt (FRG)</i>
AAPD	<i>Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland</i>
ABAKO	<i>Alliance des Bakongo</i>
BAA	Bureau of African Affairs
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CPP	Convention People's Party (Ghana)
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office (UK)
EEC	European Economic Community
FES	<i>Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FRG)</i>
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRD	Information Research Department (UK)
KGB	<i>Komitet gosudarstvennoj bezopasnosti (USSR)</i>
MAI	<i>Ministerium für Außenhandel und Innerdeutschen Handel (East German)</i>
MfAA	<i>Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (GDR)</i>
MNC	<i>Mouvement National Congolais</i>
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLC	National Liberation Council (Ghana)
NSC	National Security Council (US)
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OCAM	<i>Organisation Commune d'Afrique et Malgache</i>
ONUC	<i>Operation des Nations Unies au Congo</i>
PA AA	<i>Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (Germany)</i>
PRAAD	Public Records and Archives Administration Department (National Archives, Ghana)
SED	<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (East German)</i>
TNA	The National Archives (UK)
UAR	United Arab Republic (Egypt)
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (Rhodesia)
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
UN	United Nations
VRA	Volta River Authority
VRP	Volta River Project
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions

## Introduction

*Ghana's independence had a larger significance in that it represented a moral moment, a historic break, a rupture in the colonial scheme of things, and a new departure. It was an event that placed Africa, at least for a time, as a player on the world stage.<sup>1</sup>*

On 6 March 1957, the British Gold Coast became an independent state taking the name of an ancient West African empire called Ghana. The Duchess of Kent and Home Secretary Richard Butler arrived from London to represent Her Majesty's Government at the independence celebrations. After a solemn ceremony symbolizing the transferral of power, the Union Jack waving in front of the Gold Coast Assembly was replaced with the national flag of Ghana. The event was closely watched by the rest of the world — at least by the world's informed public opinion — through camera footages and reports of dozens of journalists and correspondents. Representatives from fifty-six countries, over two-thirds of the member states of the United Nations (UN), and also from not-as-yet independent countries such as Nigeria, Jamaica or the French African colonial territories attended the celebrations, as well as personalities like Martin Luther King or Fenner Brockway. Everybody wished “the first Negro colony to become a state” all the best.<sup>2</sup>

The great powers recognized the potential that lay in Ghana as key to the awakening African continent. The British hoped that the consolidation of a democratic government in Accra would lead the way to similar transitions in the rest of their African dependencies, demonstrating Whitehall's ability to transform the Empire into a successful, multiracial Commonwealth of Nations. The United States, traditionally anti-colonialist but whose priority rested now in winning the Cold War, demonstrated its interest by sending a top-level delegation to the independence ceremonies headed by Vice-President Richard Nixon. After meeting with Prime

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<sup>1</sup> Apter, David E. “Ghana's Independence: Triumph and Paradox.” *Transition*, no. 98 (Jan. 2008): 6–22, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Milne, June. *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*. London: Panaf, 2000, p. 77-78.

Minister Kwame Nkrumah, back in Washington Nixon confirmed: “[We must] follow closely the evolution of this state, realizing that its success or failure is going to have profound effect upon the future of this part of Africa.”<sup>3</sup>

The Soviet delegation, for its part, immediately started a charm offensive towards Ghana, organizing in the days after the celebration a cocktail party at the Ambassador Hotel in Accra. Moscow offered Accra economic aid in return for a swift exchange of diplomatic representations at embassy level, which however the Ghanaians were reluctant to grant at first. Even though the “pilot plant” of black African statehood declared its neutrality in the Cold War, there was a tacit consensus with London and Washington that its non-alignment would look westward and not eastward. Despite first timid contacts between Ghana and the socialist countries, two years later the American embassy in Accra could thus still describe the relations between the United States and Ghana as “good [...] friendly and fruitful.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet the atmosphere between London and Accra worsened in the late 1950s, because of the authoritarian internal policies of Nkrumah and his Convention People’s Party (CPP). In 1960, Washington too began taking a critical view at Ghana, rather for its radical pan-African activism though; the US Secretary of State told the embassy in Accra:

Nkrumah has grandiose view part he is to play in future Africa. Resistance and resentment [against] his leadership attempts [is] growing in Africa and we hope counter force[s] such as Nigeria will now begin [to] assert strong moderating influence on [the] manner in which regional cooperation is achieved. [...] We would hope his great energies and talents could be turned inward for a time to meet [the] challenge [of] developments within Ghana itself.<sup>5</sup>

So while the “wind of change” redesigned Africa’s political map and brought, as Nkrumah advocated, colonialism to an end everywhere on the continent, except for southern Africa, Ghana “lurched to the left” to a surprising extent, and the relations between Accra and the leading powers of the Western world entered a downward

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<sup>3</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 19, Report by the Vice President, 05.04.1957.

<sup>4</sup> Nwaubani, Ebere. “Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 4 (Oct. 2001): 599–622, here p. 603. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180775> [15.02.2016].

<sup>5</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 304, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 13.10.1960.



spiral; the escalation culminated in the rupture of diplomatic ties between Accra and London during the dispute over the Rhodesian issue in 1965. After years of frustrated hopes, as Nkrumah was finally deposed in 1966 by a joint military-police coup d'état, an “audible sigh of official relief” was heard in Washington, London, Paris, and also in Bonn.<sup>6</sup>

Nkrumah from his exile in Guinea accused the secret services of the United States, the United Kingdom and West Germany of having masterminded the coup. What had really happened? How could a politician educated in America and England take a country with solid cultural and economic ties to the West so far away from what the leading Western circles considered acceptable? Had Nkrumah really been the victim of neocolonialist machinations, as he denounced, or was this just the natural epilogue of a dictatorial regime which in the pursuit of ideological chimeras had alienated its internal and international supporters?<sup>7</sup> Reconstructing and explaining the series of events that led, within less of a decade, to the progressive estrangement between the government of the first Black African colony to become independent and the leadership of the capitalist world, in the case of three of its most representative nations, is the principal aim of the present dissertation.

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<sup>6</sup> Birmingham, David. *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism*. Rev. ed. Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1998, p. 97.

<sup>7</sup> Hansen, Emmanuel. “Ghana: Background to Revolution.” *Transition*, no. 35 (February 1, 1968): 24–28.

## Literature Review

The subject of this work is specific. It does not intend to provide an overall reassessment of the figure of Kwame Nkrumah and his government, on which there is already a large bibliography, and not even of Ghana's foreign relations in this epoch as a whole. It deals with just one of the various layers in which was articulated the ambitious foreign policy of this bold West African state, which by the fall of Nkrumah in 1966 entertained diplomatic relations with over 60 nations, in a very special period of time for the history of Africa and for the entire world.

It is possible to say that altogether Ghana's international relations developed on five main levels, which frequently overlapped among each other:

1. Africa, i.e. the independent African states, as of 1963 united in the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but also the territories under colonial rule, with which Ghana maintained contacts through the liberation movements;
2. The Commonwealth of Nations, of which Ghana became the first Black African member state;
3. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), founded in 1961, which included also countries from the two above mentioned groups;
4. The Western, liberal capitalist countries, and their allies;
5. The Eastern, Marxist socialist countries, including Cuba.

All of these layers, which of course were interconnected, would deserve specific investigations (and they have in some cases). I decided to pinpoint my attention on the fourth of the above mentioned levels, focussing on the relations with the three Western nations which I think are to consider more relevant in this context. As a work focussed on international relations, it deals inevitably with the symmetrical foreign policy of Ghana's counterparts, i.e. the approach towards Ghana by Britain, the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany. The Ghana policy of these states is, again, just a part of the African policy of each of them, which in turn can be considered as only a tile in the great mosaic of their respective foreign policies.

History being the science that deals with the description and the explanation of particular events, the analysis of apparently microscopic aspects of a given problem

for their own sake would not be unusual. However, as Edward Ingram affirmed, “even microhistorians claim to see the entire world in their grains of sand,” and I am no exception in this sense.<sup>8</sup> There are in fact a series of fairly important thematic threads running together when dealing with the relations between Ghana and Britain, the United States and West Germany during Nkrumah’s rule, such as:

- Pan-Africanism, anti-colonialism, African nationalism;
- British decolonization, the end of the Empire;
- The Cold War in the Third World;
- US policy towards Africa under Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson;
- Soviet and Chinese African policy in the 1950s and 1960s;
- The clash between West and East Germany over the recognition of the latter by non-aligned countries.

Each one of these topics, which have all been the object of a large literature, represents part of the background to the present dissertation. I reckon that providing here an extended, complete review of the literature produced on all the above mentioned subjects in the last half century would be an exceedingly time and space consuming endeavour, perhaps even counterproductive in the face of the actual purpose of this work, which is to offer a primary-source based analysis of the relationship between Nkrumah’s regime and the West. I shall therefore briefly present in the following paragraphs the secondary sources which have served me as most significant support in the three years devoted to this research, referring to other, specialized surveys for more thorough bibliographic reviews.

The founding father of the studies on political Ghana must be considered Dennis Austin. His book *Politics in Ghana*, published in 1964, was already at the time considered “the definitive study of modern Ghanaian politics,” and has remained the starting point of every serious historical enquiry on the transition of the Gold Coast

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Elman, Colin, and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds. *Bridges and Boundaries. Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations*. BCSIA Studies in International Security. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001, p. 79.

towards independence, and the first years of Nkrumah's rule as prime minister.<sup>9</sup> It contains some fairly critical views on the drift towards autocratic rule as of 1957, and was therefore banned in Ghana by the regime's censorship when it first came out.<sup>10</sup>

Given the personification of power especially in the last years of the CPP regime, it is in fact difficult to separate the literature on Ghana's political system in that period from the bibliography on Nkrumah's life and personality. This tendency to identify the Ghanaian nation with the leader's person was encouraged by Nkrumah himself — it is not by chance that he entitled his autobiography, published on the eve of independence, "Ghana."<sup>11</sup> Ever since his first rise to power as Minister for Government Affairs in 1951, the story of Kwame Nkrumah has stimulated investigations, among other, on African nationalism, charismatic leadership, and postcolonial rule;<sup>12</sup> the relationship between political and military leaders, with special view on the 1966 coup d'état that overthrew his regime;<sup>13</sup> pan-Africanism;<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Allott, A. N. Review of *Review of Politics in Ghana 1946-1960*, by Dennis Austin. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 41, no. 2 (1965): 352–53. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2610677> [22.01.2016].

For a general discussion of the history of the Gold Coast and the transition to political self-rule, see a.o. Gocking, Roger S. *The History Of Ghana*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2005. More dated, but still valid: Bourret, Florence Mabel. *Ghana — The Road to Independence, 1919 - 1957*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960.

<sup>10</sup> "Between 1957 and 1960 the area of open discussion narrowed as the opposition was forced out of public life, the result being that the leaders who had held the CPP steady throughout its brief history began to quarrel with Nkrumah and each other. Others again were held in prison under the Preventive Detention Act. The effect was to reduce political life to a barely discernible level of private conflict among his followers over the distribution of presidential favours." Austin, Dennis. *Politics in Ghana, 1946 - 1960*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964, p. 48. The British, conversely, given the value of the book for propaganda purposes, tried to smuggle in copies of the book for clandestine distribution, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), FO 1110/1828, Unwin to Storey, 11.12.1964.

<sup>11</sup> Nkrumah, Kwame. *Ghana : The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957. For a thorough investigation on how Nkrumah used 'the cult of personality' to construct a Ghanaian national identity, see Fuller, Harcourt. "Building a Nation: Symbolic Nationalism during the Kwame Nkrumah Era in the Gold Coast/Ghana." Phd, London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom), 2010. <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/2379/> [23.01.2016].

<sup>12</sup> Filesi, Teobaldo. *Il ventennio di Nkrumah*. Como: Casa Ed. Pietro Cairoli, 1966; Woronoff, Jon. *West African Wager: Houphouët versus Nkrumah*. Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1972; Goetze, Dieter. *Castro - Nkrumah - Sukarno*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1977; Mazrui, Ali Al'Amin. *Nkrumah's Legacy and Africa's Triple Heritage between Globalization and Counter Terrorism*. Accra: Ghana Univ. Press, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Baynham, Simon. *The Military and Politics in Nkrumah's Ghana*. Westview Special Studies on Africa. Boulder: Westview Press, 1988; Alexander, H T. *African Tightrope*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1965; Afrifa, Akwasi A. *The Ghana Coup: 24th February 1966*. 2. impr. London: Cass & Co., 1967; Barker, Peter. *Operation Cold Chop : The Coup That Topped Nkrumah*. Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1969; Hettne, Björn. "Soldiers and Politics: The Case of Ghana." *Journal of Peace Research* 17, no. 2 (Jan. 1980): 173–93. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423423> [31.05.2013]; Baynham, Simon. "Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?: The Case of Nkrumah's National Security Service." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, no. 1 (March 1, 1985): 87–103. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/160465> [22.05.2013].

<sup>14</sup> Agyeman, Opoku. *Nkrumahs Ghana and East Africa: Pan-Africanism and African Interstate Relations*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1992; Onwumere, Obinna. "Pan-Africanism: The Impact of the Nkrumah Years, 1945–1966." In *Trans-Atlantic Migration: The Paradoxes of Exile*, edited by Toyin Falola and Niyi Afolabi, 229–42. New York: Routledge, 2008; Calchi Novati, Giampaolo. "Dal panafricanismo ideale al panafricanismo reale e l'opera di Kwame Nkrumah." *Africa : Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italo-Africano* (2010), no. 65

African socialism;<sup>15</sup> the relationship between African liberation and the civil rights movement in the United States;<sup>16</sup> neocolonialism, postcolonialism, dependency theory, and on North-South relations more in general.<sup>17</sup>

Broadly speaking, those who have written on his person and rule can be divided into two categories: on one side the critics, which can include, apart from the already mentioned Austin, Bretton, Omari, Rooney, Davidson;<sup>18</sup> on the other, apologists such as Bing, Reitsch, Ikoku, Hadjor, Milne, and Rahman.<sup>19</sup> This reflects the highly polarizing nature of Nkrumah as political leader and theoretician. There are also a few more neutral works, like those of Birmingham's and Boateng's, which however seem to be the exceptions confirming the rule.<sup>20</sup> Besides to the bibliography on Nkrumah, one should also mention also the works which were produced by Nkrumah

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(March-Dec. 2010) 1–4 (2010): 58–81. Barber, Crone, and Katie L. “The Construction of Meta-Narratives: Perspectives on Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in Ghana, 1957-1966.” Ph.D., University of Sheffield, 2014. <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/8210/> [23.01.2016].

<sup>15</sup> Friedland, William H., and Rosberg, Carl G. *African Socialism*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ.Pr, 1964; Fitch, Bob, and Mary Oppenheimer. *Ghana: End of an Illusion*. Vol. Vol. 18. Monthly Review 3. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966;

James, C. L. R. *Nkrumah and the Ghana revolution*. London: Allison and Busby, 1977; McCain, James. “Perceptions of Socialism in Post-Socialist Ghana: An Experimental Analysis.” *African Studies Review* 22, no. 3 (Dicembre 1979): 45–63. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/523895> [31.05.2013]; Metz, Steven. “In Lieu of Orthodoxy: The Socialist Theories of Nkrumah and Nyerere.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 20, no. 3 (1982): 377–92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/160523> [25.01.2016]; Biney, Ama. “The Development of Kwame Nkrumah's Political Thought in Exile, 1966-1972.” *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 1 (2009): 81–100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40206699> [25.01.2016].

<sup>16</sup> Nimako, Kwame. “Nkrumah, African Awakening and Neo-Colonialism: How Black America Awakened Nkrumah and Nkrumah Awakened Black America.” *The Black Scholar* 40, no. 2 (2010): 54–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41163920> [25.01.2016].

<sup>17</sup> Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford, Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. For a general discussion on Nkrumah's legacy in terms of political thinking, see *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.4, no.10, January 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Bretton, Henry L. *The Rise and Fall of Kwame Nkrumah: A Study of Personal Rule in Africa*. New York: Praeger, 1966; Omari, Thompson Peter. *Kwame Nkrumah: The Anatomy of an African Dictatorship*. New York: Africana Publ. Corp, 1970; Rooney, David. *Kwame Nkrumah: The Political kingdom in the Third World*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1988; Davidson, Basil. *Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah*. Rev. ed. Oxford: James Currey/Boydell & Brewer Limited, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Bing, Geoffrey. *Reap the Whirlwind: An Account of Kwame Nkrumahs Ghana from 1950 to 1966*. London: Maggibon & Kee, 1968; Reitsch, Hanna. *Ich flog in Afrika für Nkrumahs Ghana*. Munich: F.A. Herbig, 1979; Ikoku, Sam G. *Le Ghana de Nkrumah: Autopsie de La Ire République 1957 - 1966*. Paris: Maspero, 1971; Hadjor, Kofi Buenor. *Nkrumah and Ghana: The Dilemma of Postcolonial Power*. London, New York: KPI, 1988; Milne, Kwame Nkrumah; Rahman, Ahmad A. *The Regime Change of Kwame Nkrumah: Epic Heroism in Africa and the Diaspora*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Birmingham, David. *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism*. Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1998; Boateng, Charles Adom. *The Political Legacy of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 2003. See also Amonoo, Ben. *Ghana 1957 - 1966: The Politics of Institutional Dualism*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1981.

himself (with the help of ghost-writers), for the impact which some of them had especially on the development of later African political thought.<sup>21</sup>

Given the purpose of this research, the literature I have mostly been dealing with is that which focuses on Ghana's foreign policy, especially its extra-African relations. One of the above listed works which deserves a special mention in this sense is Geoffrey Bing's *Reap the Whirlwind*. Bing's book, based on his experience as Attorney General and adviser on general political matters in Nkrumah's government, helps to clarify why there was all this 'hype' about Ghana in the first place, and also why the British reacted so emotionally when the country's development took a different direction than they had expected.

Ghana was, as we know, the first sub-Saharan colony to emancipate itself from colonial tutelage; as was already recognized at the time, Britain's decision to proceed with a swift termination of the colonial tie "ranks as one of the most important and influential decisions in post-war Africa."<sup>22</sup> However, Bing's reminds us that Ghana was not the first African state to gain independence after the colonial period. Ethiopia and Liberia had always been free (apart, in the former's case, for a short-lived Italian occupation), and by 1956, all northern Africa except for Algeria had already decolonized. To be sure, for Britain the Gold Coast was a "model colony," a net contributor of dollars to the sterling area, which by the flourishing cocoa trade had significantly contributed to Britain's financial consolidation after the war. Nevertheless, from 1957 to the fall of Nkrumah in 1966, Ghana "was illuminated by the glare of world publicity," attracting an amount of international attention which, be it positive or negative, stood in fact in no relation to the negligible strategical or geographical relevance of this seven-million-people country in West Africa, whose only fundamental contribution to the world economy was the supply of about one-third of the global cocoa crop.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For a synthetic review of Nkrumah's works, see Wallerstein, Immanuel. "Implicit Ideology in Africa: A Review of Books by Kwame Nkrumah." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 11, no. 4 (Dec. 1967): 518–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/173156> [18.02.2013].

<sup>22</sup> McKay, Vernon. *Africa in World Politics*. 1962 Repr. New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1963, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, p. II.

The circumstance that Ghana in this period rose to such a disproportionate importance was, as Bing points out, in the first place tied to internal British political factors, and to how Ghana was perceived in Britain, in the media and among the politicians. While the conservatives resented Nkrumah's anti-colonialist rhetoric and his pressure for a rapid dismantling of the Empire, the liberals, in Britain and elsewhere, were especially disappointed when Nkrumah turned authoritarian and Marxist, as they had hoped that Ghana would prove the South African racists wrong, showing that black people could rule themselves democratically and run a modern economy with success.<sup>24</sup> Bing's argument that Ghana was expected to wash out by its example Britain's African sin number one, namely having permitted the establishment of apartheid in South Africa, is significant, and part of the argument of this dissertation.

Observing the relations between Britain and Ghana inevitably leads to look at the larger picture of the end of the Empire, one of the classical subjects of international history. The current academic debate seems mainly to be focussed on the issue of the extent to which Britain voluntarily chose to end the centuries-old imperialist experience, against the perspective, held by many, that it was more or less forced to decolonize by economic weakness, international and great power pressure, and the strength of nationalist movements in the colonies themselves. In order to get an overview of the different arguments, an indispensable contribution is made by Nicholas White, who reminds us that, as should be always the rule approaching history, "any single-cause explanation of decolonisation will be simplistic."<sup>25</sup> Quoting on Louis and Robinson, the preservation of the Empire is thus presented as depending on three elements: "(1) that colonial peoples acquiesced with British rule; (2) that the politicians and voters in the metropole accepted colonial commitments on economic and ethical grounds; and that (3) the empire was recognised by international powers and organisations."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, p. 14-17.

<sup>25</sup> White, Nicholas J. *Decolonisation. The British Experience Since 1945*. London: Longman, 1999, p. 75

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

It is clear that by 1960 all three elements were lacking solidity; to decide which of these should come first in order of priority depends on the perspective chosen and the sources employed.<sup>27</sup> For the purpose of the present enquiry, which deals with postcolonial relations, one further question is crucial though: was decolonization, as has often been argued, “the continuation of empire by other means”?<sup>28</sup> Did the the British choose to decolonize in order to replace the formal Empire with an informal, Anglo-American economic dominance, more suited to the modern times? Was the gift of political independence a hollow box for the Africans which concealed the reality of enduring economic dependence?<sup>29</sup>

These are pertinent questions to ask here, since Nkrumah himself was deeply convinced that this was actually the case, and even elaborated in theoretical terms the concept that in his view best described the situation in many former African dependencies: neocolonialism.<sup>30</sup> It is impossible to understand Ghana’s foreign policy under Nkrumah without taking into consideration the desperate effort to escape British influence and reliance on Western markets. While dependency theories have fallen into disrepute, it is in fact hard to deny, based on what the archives reveal and many analysts have claimed, that Ghana was to a good extent object of neocolonialist machinations in its developmental years, although this perspective should not be pushed too far, if the element of agency is not to be attributed solely on the side of the dominant powers.<sup>31</sup>

Nkrumah’s nationalism and pan-Africanism was, with all its undeniable contradictions, part of what Barraclough termed “the revolt against the West,” the great uprising among the non-white peoples of the world against European imperialism and Western capitalism.<sup>32</sup> At the time of the Afro-Asian Bandung

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<sup>27</sup> See, for a recent contribution on the matter, Hyam, Ronald. *Britain’s Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> Louis, William R., and Ronald Robinson. “Empire preserv’d: how the Americans put anti-communism before anti-imperialism.” In *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*, edited by Prasenjit Duara, 152-161. *Rewriting Histories*. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 152-161.

<sup>30</sup> See Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 44-56.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> Barraclough, Geoffrey. “The Revolt Against The West,” in Duara, *Decolonization*, p. 118–130.



conference of 1955 in Indonesia, which saw the participation of Nkrumah as prime minister of the Gold Coast, this revolt crystallized in an Afro-Asian bloc which made its voice felt at the United Nations and among the Non-Aligned, the latter including at that point also a European member state such as Tito's Yugoslavia. The NAM, which co-existed with the Soviet-sponsored Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO), represented the evolution of the anti-colonial movement into something which aspired to be a third force between East and West. It was, in this sense, a child of the Cold War era, and also Nkrumah's role — Ghana was both member of NAM and AAPSO — has often be seen in this perspective, as a Third World leader who sought to exploit great power rivalry for his own purposes.

As Ghana was courted both by the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies, researchers, also in recent times, have often chosen to study the Ghanaian case in the perspective of the East-West conflict, and the engagement put in place by both camps to win the favour of this particular African country, especially by the means of development aid, trade and investments.<sup>33</sup> Muehlenbeck has devoted a significant part of his work on Kennedy's policy towards Africa to go back over the effort paid by J.F.K., and to a minor extent, by the Eisenhower administration, to court Kwame Nkrumah's regime, in order to scrutinize the respective approach of the two US administrations to Third World nationalism in the context of the Cold War.<sup>34</sup>

The 'progenitor' of those who have made Ghana's foreign relations the object of intense scrutiny in the East-West perspective is, however, W. Scott Thompson. A contemporary of Nkrumah with excellent connections to many US foreign policy stakeholders who dealt with Ghana in those days, he wrote on Ghana's international

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<sup>33</sup> Muehlenbeck, Philip E. *Betting on the Africans. John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012; Engel, Ulf, and Hans-Georg Schleicher. *Die beiden deutschen Staaten in Afrika: Zwischen Konkurrenz und Koexistenz 1949 - 1990*. Hamburg: Inst. für Afrika-Kunde, 1998; Lorenzini, Sara. *Due Germanie in Africa: La cooperazione allo sviluppo e la competizione per i mercati di materie prime e tecnologia*. Florence: Polistampa, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> In his book he reaches the conclusion that Kennedy was the only Cold War US president who took sincere interest in Africa and its nationalist leaders, and that his proactive approach was neglected from the moment on his successor took over in the White House. Cf. e.g. Lawrence, Mark A. "The Rise and Fall of Non-Alignment," in McMahon, Robert J. *The Cold War in the Third World*. Oxford, Malden MA: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013, 139-155; Latham, Michael E. "The Cold War in the Third World, 1963-1975." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 258-80. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.

activism, from his point of view of an American political scientist, as “a case study of the foreign policy of [...] a small, determined state which attempted to enlarge its influence and increase its power,” in “a period when the great powers were vying for the favor of the small new states”; Thompson’s well-documented book soon became the first reference for of all those who approach the matter of Ghanaian foreign relations in this period.<sup>35</sup>

It was Nkrumah who brought pan-Africanism, the political movement for the liberation of Africa and for the unification all Africans, until then largely an affair of the black diaspora in America and Britain, for the first time on African soil.<sup>36</sup> During the 1957 ceremonies, Nkrumah vowed that Ghana’s independence was meaningless unless linked with the total liberation of Africa from imperialism and colonialism. In the following years, Accra became a safe haven for nationalists and freedom fighters from all over the African continent, who found there political and financial support, and even military training. In this way, the Ghanaians accumulated, in Thompson’s words, “immense political capital in making their state the Mecca of African nationalism.”<sup>37</sup>

Considering the missionary zeal which permeated Ghana’s diplomacy in those heroic days, it should come as no surprise that some of the protagonists of the time, such as Nkrumah’s foreign ministers, might have decided to put their memories to paper.<sup>38</sup> These recollections, which naturally tend to be somewhat optimistic in their assessments of the political results of Ghana’s diplomacy in that period, highlight how, while Ghana’s foreign policy of course always kept an African focus, it also developed in the course of Nkrumah’s presidency into a truly global approach to

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<sup>35</sup> Thompson, Willard Scott. *Ghana’s Foreign Policy 1957 - 1966. Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969, p. xi, xviii.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Sherwood, Marika. “Pan-African Conferences, 1900-1953: What Did ‘Pan-Africanism’ Mean?” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 10 (January 2012): 106–26. <http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol4no10/4.10Pan-African.pdf> [16.02.2016].

<sup>37</sup> Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. xvii.

<sup>38</sup> Quaison-Sackey, Alex. *Africa Unbound: Reflections of an African Statesman*. New York: F.A. Praeger, 1963; Dei-Anang, Michael. *The Administration of Ghanas Foreign Relations, 1957 - 1965: A Personal Memoir*. Commonwealth Papers 17. London: Athlone Press, 1975; Quarm, S. E. *Diplomatic Offensive: An Overview of Ghana’s Diplomacy under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah*. Accra: Afram Publ., 1997; Armah, Kwesi. *Peace without Power: Ghana’s Foreign Policy 1957-1966*. Accra: Ghana Univ. Press, 2004.

foreign affairs, participating in the work of the organs of the United Nations with great enthusiasm. In the words of Kwesi Armah, Nkrumah's High Commissioner in London, "the basic aims of Ghanaian foreign policy under the First Republic [1960-1966] were: (1) African independence, and (2) the maintenance of world peace through positive neutrality and non-alignment."<sup>39</sup>

While he still was Ghana's prime minister, Nkrumah told the members of parliament: "our aim is to work with others to achieve an African personality in international affairs."<sup>40</sup> Nkrumah's goal was not only to expedite the liberation of the African continent from foreign interference, and to bring about a continental union government, but also to make a unified Africa a pillar of the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>41</sup> For all these reasons, all great powers attributed, at least until the mid-1960s, a crucial value to Ghana for their policy towards Africa and also for their Third-World policy. While London needed Accra to carry out in an orderly manner its state-building programme south of the Sahara, both Washington and Moscow reckoned that by exercising influence on Ghana they might be able to orientate the awakening Black Continent in the way they desired. As in the 1960s the distance between Moscow and Beijing widened, the Chinese as well sought contact with Accra.

A by-product of the Cold War were a number of divided nations both in Asia and in Europe, which had the mischance to become the rifts where the two blocks clashed, sometimes with dreadful violence. Considering that Germany was one of, if not *the*, main causes in the Cold War, it should come as no surprise that a solid literature has established on the role of the two German states during the East-West conflict.<sup>42</sup> A sub-genre of this can be considered the growing research on inner-

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<sup>39</sup> Armah, *Peace without Power*, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> Ghana Public Records and Archives Administration (PRAAD), RG 17/1/10, Government Policy Statement by the Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah on the 5th of March, 1957.

<sup>41</sup> Das Gupta, Anirudha, and A. S. Shahid. "Ghana's Non-Alignment under Kwame Nkrumah." *International Studies: Journal of the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University* 20, no. 1 (1981): 401-9.

<sup>42</sup> In particular, End, Heinrich. *Zweimal Deutsche Außenpolitik*. Köln: Verl. Wissenschaft u. Politik, 1973; Haftendorn, Helga. *Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung: 1945 - 2000*. Stuttgart: DtVerl-Anst, 2001, *Coming of Age: German Foreign Policy since 1945*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006; Hughes, R. Gerald. *Britain, Germany and the Cold War: The Search for a European Détente, 1949-1967*. London: Routledge, 2007.

German rivalry, in particular in the Third World during the period between 1955 and 1972, the so-called “Hallstein age,” when the East Germans wooed every neutralist country which was not explicitly anti-communist in the hope to break the diplomatic embargo imposed by the Federal Republic against it — a particular foreign policy doctrine (“Hallstein Doctrine”) which carried the name of West Germany’s State Secretary Walter Hallstein.<sup>43</sup> The confrontation between East and West Germany, even if it luckily never escalated in an armed conflict, reverberated in the postcolonial states of Asia and Africa. Authors such as Engel and Schleicher, Langer, as well as Lorenzini, have developed case studies on Ghana in their works on the policy towards Africa of the two German states during the Cold War, which enrich our understanding of the interaction between the East-West conflict and postcolonial international relations.<sup>44</sup>

## **Outline and Methodology of the Present Study**

No specific work has been consecrated as yet to study Ghana’s relations with the West over the entire Nkrumah era. On the one hand critics have typically accused Nkrumah for dissipating Ghana’s political credibility in the West, where most of its main economic partners were and still are, to run after improbable socialist experiments, utopian pan-Africanist dreams, and Marxist, anti-imperialist rhetoric;<sup>45</sup> on the other, even recent contributions on the subject have portrayed Ghana’s first president as an epic anti-colonialist hero whose administration was brought down by Western intrigue.<sup>46</sup> Yet in the author’s opinion past research has failed thus far to

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<sup>43</sup> Spanger, H. Joachim, and Lothar Brock. *Die beiden deutschen Staaten in der Dritten Welt*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag GmbH, 1987; Rüdiger Marco Booz. *“Hallsteinzeit” : deutsche Außenpolitik 1955 - 1972*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1995; Engel, Ulf. *Afrikapolitik im Schatten der Hallstein-Doktrin: Die beiden deutschen Staaten und Tanzania 1964 - 1965*. Leipzig: Institut für Afrikanistik, Universität Leipzig, 1998; Kilian, Werner. *Die Hallstein-Doktrin: Der diplomatische Krieg zwischen der BRD und der DDR 1955 - 1973 ; Aus den Akten der beiden deutschen Außenministerien*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001; Glenn Gray, William. *Germany’s Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949 - 1969*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2003.

<sup>44</sup> Langer, Peter. *Außen- und Entwicklungspolitik der Bundesrepublik gegenüber Ghana. Eine Fallstudie zur Überprüfung der neueren Imperialismus-Theorien*. Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1975; Engel, Schleicher, Die beiden deutschen Staaten; Lorenzini, Due Germanie in Africa.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Thompson, Ghana’s Foreign Policy, p. 304.

<sup>46</sup> See Rahman, The Regime Change.

appreciate to an appropriate extent, how much Ghana as a state was in fact the object of an intense action of political manipulation on the part of extra-African powers, and how the escalating tensions with the Western world were related to these interferences.

The present work argues that by studying cases such as the one considered here it is possible to highlight how the fragility of the postcolonial states was furthered, up to a certain extent, by simplistic projects of “exportation of democracy” by the Western powers, coupled with Cold War tactics and narrow economic self-interest, in the early years of independence.

Ghana’s destiny in particular was especially influenced by the fact that the British released Ghana into self-rule as an experiment, a test for their ability to export statehood and democracy to their African colonies.<sup>47</sup> Whitehall expected their Gold Coast “model colony” to become a “model country” for the postcolonial African states, especially those of the Commonwealth, and were consequently embittered when things turned out differently, adopting a patronizing attitude which riled the Ghanaians.<sup>48</sup> The conflicting views between what the British pretended Ghana to be, and the expectations Nkrumah held about England’s support for his own plans for Ghana and for Africa, were voiced in long and harsh press quarrels; they greatly contributed to the deterioration of political and diplomatic relations with Britain and with the capitalist nations more in general.

Nkrumah himself was prone to political experimentation, and tried with limited results to make Ghana, heir of a British “model colony,” the nucleus of a union of socialist African states. As the first postcolonial state south of the Sahara, however, Ghana was treated as an experiment also by a great deal of foreign powers, which all tested there their approach to African issues, and sought to export their political and economic system. In this game the Western bloc was always one step ahead of the East, though the latter appeared to be catching up fast by 1962.

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<sup>47</sup> Ghana is consistently referred to by British sources of this period as “the experiment” or “our experiment”, cf. e.g. TNA, FO 371/138163, MacLennan to Home, 20.08.1959.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. TNA DO 35/9408, Snelling to Home, 05.12.1959.

The United States, but also other industrialized countries involved in the Cold War such as the Soviet Union, China, West and East Germany, tried to impress their brand on this West African country. Ghana, in the end, struggled to find its own way in the midst of a great variety of different solicitations and ideologies.

The US government lent a large sum to Ghana and to American aluminium corporations to build the hydroelectric-industrial complex of the Volta River Project, the largest single US investment in Africa at the time. While this decision surely was determined by Kennedy's sympathy for African nationalism, it can likewise be argued, as Birmingham does, that by acting this way the United States drew from the Ghanaian experience important lessons on "how to manipulate Third World politicians and extract colonial wealth through neocolonial structures. Nkrumah's complex love-hate relationship with America provided the United States with its first entrée into independent Africa. This entrée was followed not only in conservative Zaire and Kenya, but also in left-leaning Guinea and Egypt [...]."<sup>49</sup>

After the death of Kennedy, Nkrumah's last true high-level dialogue partner, the Ghana experiment was considered a failure in most of the West, and it was confidentially agreed, on both sides of the Atlantic, that it should be terminated, as quickly and painlessly as possible. When in 1965 the falling price of cocoa forced Ghana to seek the financial support of the Western countries, the latter treated its requests dilatorily. As US and British leadership waited for the maverick Ghanaian leader to be replaced by someone more malleable through a coup d'état, Ghana was, as Birmingham put it, economically and perhaps also politically, "a prisoner of the West."<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, even if in the analysis of Nkrumah's relationship with the West the element of conflict has generally been emphasized over the element of friendship and cooperation, it must likewise be stressed that Nkrumah clearly had a highly ambivalent, not to say ambiguous, attitude towards the Western nations. On the one hand he was the typical example of the Westernized élite which took over the reins of

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<sup>49</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 97.

<sup>50</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 91.

government in the postcolonial countries after the departure of the Europeans. Having spent his student years in the United States and in Britain, he upheld an admiration for the technological, economic and cultural achievements of the West, and had at the same time a soft spot for the pomp and rituals of the British monarchy. With those Western countries which could not be accused of being involved in colonial or neocolonial activities relations were cordial, and mostly focussed on economic cooperation, trade, and investments.

Canada, for instance, which Nkrumah visited during his North America trip in 1958, provided as Commonwealth member a link between the British and the American world. The Canadians took part in the first stages of the Volta dam project, offered military training for Ghana's armed forces as well technical assistance, while the Canadian High Commissioners in Accra shared opinions and information with their Commonwealth and US colleagues.<sup>51</sup> The Italians provided the engineering firm which coordinated the construction of the Volta dam [see 2.2], while the state-owned Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) erected an oil refinery in Ghana in 1963 and conducted prospects for oil deposits off Ghana's shores, while Macchi industries delivered jet aircraft to Ghana's armed forces.<sup>52</sup> Israel, surely a particular case but still a country of Western culture, even enjoyed a "special relationship" with Ghana in the first years of its independence, until pressure by the Arab states forced Nkrumah to curb the development of the relations, which remained friendly though throughout the entire period of his government.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, apart from the obvious clashes with those European powers with the worst colonial record, like France, Belgium and Portugal, as of the Congo Crisis, Nkrumah realized that the end of formal colonialism in Africa had in many ways been succeeded by a more subtle form of economic domination, and became one of the first and most vocal critics of neocolonialism and capitalist exploitation in the Third World, often expressing cordial feelings for the Soviet Union. This, as he

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<sup>51</sup> TNA, DO 195/30; 195/4; 195/11.

<sup>52</sup> Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PA AA), B34 574; PRAAD RG 17/1/197.

<sup>53</sup> Levey, Zach. "The Rise and Decline of a Special Relationship: Israel and Ghana, 1957-1966." *African Studies Review* 46, no. 1 (2003): 155-77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1514985> [11.02.2016]; s.a. PRAAD, RG 17/1/80, 17/1/130.

should have expected, alienated Ghana the sympathies of many in the West who had seen in Nkrumah a splendid example of charismatic, modernizing, successful leadership in the countries of recent independence.

The present work rests on the assumption that it would not be possible here, and perhaps would not be very useful for the purpose of this research either, to compile the detail of all the diplomatic, political, cultural and economic relations which Ghana kept with the entire group of countries considered to belong to the so-called Western bloc.<sup>54</sup> As already mentioned, the focus is thus going to be on the political, diplomatic and economic relations, mostly at the bilateral level, with three countries, to which I reckon Nkrumah's government held the most significant relationship: the United Kingdom, former colonial mother country and close, albeit increasingly uncomfortable, postcolonial partner; the United States, leading nation of the Western bloc, praised and denigrated in Nkrumah's Ghana, one could say, with about the same intensity; and West Germany, in the period under consideration consistently the country's third main trade and development aid partner after Britain and the United States, which the latter wanted to involve in their political experimenting, but which became entangled in Ghana in the dispute over the possible diplomatic recognition of East Germany.

The structure of the study is therefore going to follow a tripartite outline. The historical narrative of the events between 1957 and 1966 is constructed mostly in chronological order, although there are some thematic sub-sections.

The first chapter is dedicated to the deep but complex and increasingly problematic relationship between Britain and its "Ghanaian experiment," from the day of independence until the fall of Nkrumah's regime.

The subject of the second chapter are relations, at the political-diplomatic level and at the economic level, between the United States and Ghana. For the latter aspect, a

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<sup>54</sup> Under Nkrumah's regime Ghana maintained diplomatic relations with around 60 states of the world. Of these, 12 can be definitely counted to what is usually considered "the Western world": Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, West Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America. See Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, Appendix C.



separate sub-chapter is devoted to the Volta River Project, a complex hydroelectric enterprise, originally planned by British entrepreneurs and then grown over the years to become Nkrumah's obsession, which today is still Ghana's largest source of electrical power, but has not failed to generate criticisms for the price the country paid to realize its electrification dream.

Between the first and the second chapter, an excursus deals separately with the Congo Crisis (1960-1965), in which Ghana, the United States and Britain were all involved, and which had significant repercussions on the relationship between Ghana and the West.

Finally, the third and last chapter is dedicated to the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and Ghana, and incidentally also with the relations between the latter and the German Democratic Republic. It shows especially what high expectations the Ghanaians held for trade and economic cooperation with the Germans, and the difficulties they had to somehow keep the balance between the two wrangling German states. While at the end of the day all sides wished for closer economic relations, political constraints generated by Cold War rivalries and Germany's status as a divided and occupied country took their toll on the development of closer and more profitable contacts and exchanges. Although especially in the last years of the CPP regime the West Germans contributed with significant private and public capital to the growth of Ghana's economy, the intercourse between the two governments was marked by mistrust, reciprocal pressuring and recurrent crises.

Although this dissertation is submitted for examination in the field of African history, the methodological approach undertaken is more typical of diplomatic or international history. It will be mainly devoted to reconstruct as precisely as possible how "the West" — i.e. its diplomats and analysts and political leaders — viewed the situation in Ghana and its government, and at the same time how Nkrumah and the

Ghanaians involved in foreign policy-making elite viewed the West.<sup>55</sup> Operating in a multi-archival perspective, it is based on primary sources taken from different archives, in particular from: (1) The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) in Kew, London; (2) the Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (*Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes*, PA AA) in Berlin; (3) the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) in Accra, which I have all visited for the purpose of my doctoral research between 2014 and 2015. For the archival material on US foreign policy I am indebted especially to the online edition of the Foreign Relations of the United States collection (FRUS).

Last but not least, I would like to express, before getting to the main part of the dissertation, my appreciation for all those who have made it possible for me to complete this work, first of all my family and my partner, who have greatly supported me in these three-and-a-half years. I want to thank in particular Alessandro Volterra, Luigi Goglia, Leopoldo Nuti, Andreas Eckert and Hans-Georg Schleicher for their most valuable comments and guidance, the German Academic Exchange Service and the Department of Political Sciences at Roma Tre University for funding my research abroad, and all the staff of the archives and libraries I have visited for their help and professionalism.

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<sup>55</sup> For the sake of historical contextualization, I shall refer to the main geopolitical blocs of the epoch under scrutiny as they were at the time, namely the West, the East the Third World, and the like. I do this in full awareness of the limited explanatory value of these concepts, which do serve however their narrative purpose in this context.

# Chapter I: The United Kingdom and Ghana

## 1.1 Ghana, Nkrumah, and Britain's Decolonization

We part from the former imperial power, Great Britain, with the warmest feelings of friendship and goodwill. This is because successive Governments in the United Kingdom recognised the realities of the situation in the Gold Coast and adopted their policy accordingly. Thus, instead of that feeling of bitterness which is often born of a colonial struggle, we enter on our independence in association with Great Britain and with good relations unimpaired. We are proud that we are the first colonial territory in Africa to gain its freedom and to enter into the Commonwealth. (Kwame Nkrumah, 5 March 1957)<sup>56</sup>

In trade with the new states monopolistic and restrictive devices have been found to bring down the prices of crops and materials from the developing countries, to raise the cost of their imports, limit their credits, devalue their currencies, undermine their confidence and teach them to live on doles and handouts. The methods are involved and devious; the aims simple and transparent. The aim of imperialism is to inhibit or slow down the economic development of the ex-colonies, so that they will remain colonies in everything but name. We call this latest phase of imperialism, neo-colonialism. (Kwame Nkrumah, 10 May 1965)<sup>57</sup>

Finding specific literature on the relations between the United Kingdom and Ghana in the first years after the latter's independence can be a challenging endeavour. For good reason, one might say. The decolonization of the Gold Coast, which in 1957 became independent Ghana, cannot be considered an event on its own but must be necessarily be viewed as part of that momentous event called "End of the British Empire," which in the context of the general decolonization process led to the transformation of British imperialism in that peculiar association of states known as the Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>58</sup> The Gold Coast was but a small piece in the huge mosaic of the Empire; nonetheless, we know today that its independence marked the beginning of the second phase in the dismantling process of the British Empire in the

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<sup>56</sup> Address to Her Majesty the Queen, in *I Speak Of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology*. 1st publ. London: Heinemann, 1961, p. 108-109.

<sup>57</sup> Opening speech of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation Conference, quoted in TNA, DO 153/17, Accra to CRO, 11.05.1965.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Calchi Novati, Giampaolo, and Pierluigi Valsecchi. *Africa: la storia ritrovata. Dalle prime forme politiche alle indipendenze nazionali*. Roma: Carocci, 2005, pp. 297-311.

post-war period, which ended about a decade later.<sup>59</sup> For this and a variety of other reasons, Ghana attracted already at that time large attention in the media and at the political level, both before and after independence. This fact keeps raising, after over half a century, a number of questions to which the following chapters are going to try to find answers, drawing both on secondary literature as well as on selected materials from the National Archives of the United Kingdom, the Ghana Public Records and Archives Administration, and other Western archival funds. This dissertation asks, in particular: how was the significance of Ghana's precocious independence for the process of British decolonization perceived in those years? What were the expectations on this precursor of nation-state building south of the Sahara? How were Kwame Nkrumah and his policies viewed in Whitehall, and how did Nkrumah himself view his role in the context of the dissolution of the British Empire? How, finally, did the former colonial masters and the new rulers of the CPP get along, while the latter drifted progressively towards the left and supported liberation movements all across the African continent?

As already mentioned, the focus will be here mostly on the years after independence, 1957 to 1966; for the equally important years leading to independence and related subjects, like the relationship between Nkrumah and the British Governor of the Gold Coast Charles Arden-Clarke, I refer to the significant amount of literature that the last five decades have produced.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> White, *Decolonisation*, p.1.

<sup>60</sup> See among others the already mentioned: Austin, *Politics in Ghana*; Bourret, *Ghana: The Road to Independence*; Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography*; Gocking, *The History Of Ghana*, p. 91-114; also Rooney, David. *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke*. London: Rez Collings, 1982; Wallerstein, Immanuel Maurice. *The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast*. Paris: Mouton, 1964.

## Development for whom?

If we consider, as is generally assumed, that the British Empire was divided, until its demise, into a “sphere of rule”— the so-called “exploitation colonies” — on the one side, as opposed to the “sphere of settlement,” i.e. the white Dominions, on the other, the Gold Coast always belonged to the former realm.<sup>61</sup> It was born in the nineteenth century out of a series of conflicts between the British, who controlled a number of forts and strongholds along the Gulf of Guinea, and the Ashanti empire, which dominated the inland but pushed towards the coast and the relative terminals for the gold dust, slaves and ivory trade. The Crown Colony of the Gold Coast was formally established in 1874, although it acquired its final territorial status — coinciding with Ghana’s present borders — only after the subsequent annexation of Ashanti in 1901, the Northern Territories in 1902 (first as protectorate), and finally the Western part of German Togoland as of 1919.<sup>62</sup>

With stabilizing political conditions came on the one side the expansion of what had always been the ‘natural’ vocation of the coastal areas in the Gulf of Guinea, namely trade. While the Gold Coast maintained its traditional role as producer of gold, whose mines passed now on to British concerns, between the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century the colony however was integrated in the global economy mainly as a supplier of raw goods such as timber, rubber, palm-kernels, which left the country via the sea to reach the factories of the “mother country,” while British ships brought back in exchange finished goods made in England.<sup>63</sup>

This plantation- and trade-based economy brought great wealth to the British Empire and led to the rise of a middle class made of merchants and professionals in the coastal area of the colony. The Ashanti region was integrated too when, as of 1900, the English recognized the potential of its soil for producing the crop that still

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<sup>61</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 34-36. Cf. Fage, John D. *Storia dell’Africa*. Torino: SEI, 1995, p. 381 ff.

<sup>62</sup> Gocking, *The History Of Ghana*, p. 30 ff. First a protectorate, the Western part of Togoland became officially part of the Gold Coast only after a plebiscite in 1956.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.

today represents one main pillar of Ghana's economy: cocoa.<sup>64</sup> The advent of the cocoa era was on the one hand a blessing. It created a solid class of relatively wealthy farmers and guaranteed a steady income for the colony, as well as a significant source of hard currency for the Empire, since much of the harvest was sold to the dollar area. On the other hand, cocoa was a curse, as it made the Gold Coast dangerously dependent on one single commodity, whose price fluctuations could have disastrous repercussions on the country's economy as a whole, as well as on the government's ability to plan investment and spending, as Kwame Nkrumah and his ministers would learn soon enough.<sup>65</sup>

Between 1914 and 1945, the "model colony" of the Empire in West Africa twice contributed greatly, in economic terms and with soldiers, to the fight of the United Kingdom against its enemies. And twice the hopes of the growing intellectual bourgeoisie that British direct rule might be replaced by something more similar to the status of the white Dominions were disappointed.<sup>66</sup> After 1945, the grievances of the peasants, the cocoa farmers and the urban dwellers, who were not receiving enough imported goods in exchange for their work, joined with resentments of the war veterans; together with the disgruntlement of the middle-class intelligentsia, this formed an explosive mixture leading to the 1948 anti-British deflagration. However, as Cooper reminds, in the post-war years Britain, even though it had to renounce to the Indian "Crown Jewel", could not afford yet to lose profitable dependencies like the Gold Coast:

When the Labour Party, under Clement Attlee, took over the government in July 1945, it was operating within narrow economic constraints: war debts were in dollars, and the British economy — damaged and redirected by the war — had little ability to produce the kinds of commodities that earn hard currency. Africa's primary products offered a likely source of dollar earnings, as well as the most likely means of supplying Britain with necessities without buying them in hard currency markets. There was a political element to this as well; the Labour Party's political base in the British working class, having deferred consumption during the war and

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<sup>64</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 26.

<sup>65</sup> Sir Gordon Guggisberg, enlightened governor of the Gold Coast between 1919 and 1927, promoted the colony's development effectively, thanks to the income from the cocoa trade, yet after the 1929 slump his initiatives were discontinued, in Fage, *Storia dell' Africa*, p. 409-410.

<sup>66</sup> Founder of the National Congress of British West Africa, Gold-Coast lawyer Casely Hayford was one of the most prominent advocates of the Gold Coast's upgrading to the status of Dominion, Fage, *Storia dell' Africa*, p. 408.

having voted Churchill out in hope that its turn would come, had to be fed and the expanding welfare state paid for.<sup>67</sup>

Although the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones from the Labour Party, defined the main aim of his policy as “to guide the colonial territories to self-government within the Commonwealth,” between 1945 and 1947 the Gold Coast was involved in Labour’s “productivist vision of economic development,” which pushed for development projects “that would boost production, yield a return on investment, and earn dollars,” rather than investing in infrastructure and welfare.<sup>68</sup> This approach led to a further expansion of cocoa cultivation, and in the years of the boom in worldwide demand, after the Korean War, the Gold Coast profited greatly from high prices. However, until independence neither the farmers nor the semi-autonomous Gold Coast government were allowed to spend most of the money for consumption or investment; the sterling balances were kept in London in the form of treasuries, while the marketing boards accumulated balances that could not be cashed in. In practice, the colonies were helping repay Great Britain’s war debts, without receiving much in return in terms of consumption, infrastructure or welfare, yet accumulating considerable reserves.<sup>69</sup>

The 1948 disturbances, and the transition to internal self-rule which took place until 1951, when Nkrumah became head of the government, disrupted the plans for a slow process of autonomization that the advocates of colonial development had envisaged. On the other hand, the road towards independence left the basic economic patterns of colonialism surprisingly untouched. Little trickled in to Ghana from the Colonial Development and Welfare Funds. The earnings from cocoa and Ghana’s other natural resources went in small amounts to the expanding educational services and to build roads and other infrastructure, but mostly paid for imports from Britain; the surplus was put to the side as a reserve which helped to financially stabilize the

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<sup>67</sup> Cooper, Frederick. *Decolonization and African Society: the Labor Question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996, p. 203.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204-205. Cf. Nielsen, Waldemar A. *The Great Powers and Africa*. New York: Praeger, 1969, p. 29.

<sup>69</sup> “Success was measured in productionist terms: summarizing his ministry’s achievements at the end of 1948, Creech Jones put the ‘export drive’ first, ‘dollar earnings and savings’ second, and social programs in Africa and the West Indies thirteenth.” *Ibid.*, p. 206.

sterling area. In economic terms, Britain's bequeathal to Ghana was hence not "one of bitterness, exploitation and misery as such," rather "a certain sort of economy, one which worked passably well according to the standards set for it: the earning of sufficient revenue to run a government to provide for order and promote the exports necessary to pay for imports from the metropolis."<sup>70</sup>

Having obtained a smooth transition from colonialism to self-rule at the political level, Nkrumah thought the British would help complete Ghana's independence at the economic level as well providing investment and aid, so as to transform it from a territory largely dependent on exports of one commodity, used to pay for imports of all manufactured goods, to the first industrialized state of Black Africa. For their part, the English thought that their "model colony, devoid of bitterness"<sup>71</sup> would accept as a fact of life that the transition from a cash-crop, trade-based economy to one centred on manufacturing, tertiary, and welfare, if it were ever to take place, would require several generations. Yet Nkrumah, who had been able to deliver to the masses in few years and without much bloodshed "self-government now," had promised also "development now". Like other nationalist African leaders, he was obsessed by fears of missing the rendezvous with modernity, and sought after a "jet-propelled" development:

All dependent territories are backward in education, in agriculture and industry. The economic independence that should follow and maintain political independence demands every effort from the people, a total mobilization of brain and manpower resources. What other countries have taken three hundred years or more to achieve, a once dependent territory must try to accomplish in a generation if it is to survive. Unless it is, as it were, 'jet-propelled,' it will lag behind and thus risk everything for which it has fought.<sup>72</sup>

This fundamental misunderstanding between Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana, which expected the (ex-)colonialists to help in the obtainment of economic independence, and Harold Macmillan's Britain, which struggled with its "descent from power" and

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<sup>70</sup> Dalton, John H. "Colony and Metropolis: Some Aspects of British Rule in Gold Coast and Their Implications for an Understanding of Ghana Today." *The Journal of Economic History* 21, no. 4 (Dec 1961): 552–65, p. 555. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2114418> [04.06.2015].

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 556.

<sup>72</sup> Nkrumah, quoted in Rivkin, Arnold. *Africa and the West: Elements of Free-World Policy*. New York: F. A. Praeger, 1962, p. 6.



structural economic problems, led after independence to bitter accusations of neocolonialism and patronization from one side, and of totalitarianism and communism from the other, while Ghana began throwing the vestiges of British parliamentarism and civil rights over board as dead weight on its way to socialist development.

## **A Black Democracy? The “Ghana Experiment”**

The leitmotiv of Britain’s approach to the Gold Coast’s road towards self-government was to consider Ghana “our experiment.” This term runs, literally or paraphrased, through numerous documents of British policymakers and diplomats of the time, and can be found in press comments too.<sup>73</sup> Ghana was seen as a test — but a test for what? After all, it was not the first exploitation colony that was granted self-rule; in 1947, the British had released almost 400 million Indians and Pakistanis into independence, the following year Ceylon was granted self-government with the status of Dominion, while Burma became an independent republic. However, the history of the Indian independence movement had been one of conflict, at times violent, with the imperial power, and the partition between India and Pakistan had led to a massive ethnic-religious bloodshed, whose consequences are still visible to date.

In the Gold Coast, things were supposed to be different, for a number of reasons. First of all, the Gold Coast was much a smaller territory than the huge Indian sub-continent, though still of the size of an average European nation, and to be sure, organizing an ordinate transition to independence would be much easier in a country of 5 million than in one of 400. Second, the Gold Coast was one of the most advanced territories south of the Sahara in terms of government revenues, trade, education, infrastructure, as well as for the presence of an educated “national

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<sup>73</sup> See e.g., TNA, DO 35/9427, MacLennan to Home, 16.04.1957; DO 35/9408, Meeting With Sir Robert Jackson, 07.10.1957. In the edition of 4 December 1959, the magazine of the Christian Church *The Christian* carried a leader on “The Ghana Experiment,” in which it was claimed that “there can be no question that the British people, for the most part, are viewing the Ghana experiment with the utmost goodwill and with firm hope of its success.” As reported in PRAAD, ADM 16/21, “Ghana Through the World Press During December 1959.” S.a. Thompson, Ghana’s Foreign Policy, p. 56.

bourgeoisie” of lawyers, teachers and merchants; there appeared to be national cohesion, supported by the traditional rule of tribal chiefs.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, until the establishment of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) in 1947, it had remained remarkably quiet and aloof from the kind of nationalist and Marxist agitation that rocked Asia since the early 1900s.

To be sure, the 1948 revolt and the rise of the CPP accelerated the process of autonomization. After 1951, nobody seriously doubted that the Gold Coast was rapidly heading towards independence; however, the circumstance that the nationalist conflict had taken place without any considerable “racial or religious animosity,” that “there was no feudal aristocracy, warrior caste, *compradore* or white settler group,” and that widespread African problems such as “forced labor, the pass system, the color bar, and arbitrary military rule were conspicuously absent,”<sup>75</sup> made this “model colony” the perfect candidate to become the “model independent African state.”<sup>76</sup> Ghana, as it seemed, would show the world that British colonialism could be, after all, a win-win experience for both the “mother country” and for the dependency.

There was also clearly a racial aspect in the way the Gold Coast, and later Ghana, acquired a central role in British public debate during Nkrumah’s government. First of all, liberals thought that Ghana should prove wrong those who argued — and there were still many at that time — that black Africans were not in the condition to lead a modern country without resorting to violence, and without abusing their power for self-enrichment and corruption.<sup>77</sup> As Nkrumah’s Attorney General and political advisor Geoffrey Bing highlighted, there was among British liberals the belief that

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<sup>74</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, p. 3 ff.

<sup>75</sup> Dalton, *Colony and Metropolis*, p. 552.

<sup>76</sup> Careful preparations [...] had been going on since 1951 to prepare the Gold Coast for independence. For years the civil service had been trained and inculcated with a high level of professionalism and integrity. British, American, European and Middle Eastern firms were operating all over the country in commercial and industrial enterprises. The Five Year Plan, virtually complete because of Nkrumah’s accelerated demands, had laid the foundations of a modern state; and over the years the CPP Government, with Arden-Clarke’s positive support, had built up a credit of £200m.” Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 130.

<sup>77</sup> Kenya’s Governor Sir Philip Mitchell surely spoke the mind of many when in 1947, during the African Governor’s Conference in London, he said that the “theoretical ideas of colonial self-government [were] totally divorced from the realities of the present day [...] as if there was — yet — any reason to suppose that any African can be cashier of a village council for 3 weeks without stealing the cash.” As quoted in Schuknecht, Rohland. *British Colonial Development Policy After the Second World War: The Case of Sukumaland, Tanganyika*. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2010, p. 192.

“in one field at least Ghana could succeed where Britain, the United States and the Western World had failed,” and correct “the great African error which their forebears had made fifty years before,” i.e. endowing in South Africa a minority of whites with the power to rule over a majority of coloured.<sup>78</sup> When thus the South Africans in 1948 instituted the system of racial segregation and exploitation infamously known as *apartheid*, those who despised this model of white supremacy cast Nkrumah, out of sense of guilt, in the role of Messiah, but “a Messiah of orthodoxy, who, by his exercise of British political techniques would convert the racialists of Southern Africa;” in their view, “Ghana had been called into existence out of pure imperial beneficence so that Western Africa might prove Southern Africa wrong.”<sup>79</sup>

Nkrumah, in fact, was aware of this special role Ghana had been cast in. In the speech he held the day of independence, 6 March 1957, for the State Opening of Parliament, he reminded his fellow citizens that “if we show ourselves disunited, inefficient or corrupt, then we shall have gravely harmed all those millions in Africa who put their trust in us and look to Ghana to prove that African people can build a state of their own based on democracy, tolerance and racial equality.”<sup>80</sup> And in front of the crowd assembled on the Polo Ground to watch the changing of flag ceremony, he repeated the warning: “You ought to stand firm behind us so that we can prove to the world that when the African is given a chance he can show the world that he is somebody. [...] Today, from now on, there is a new African in the world [...] ready to fight his own battle and show that after all the black man is capable of managing his own affairs.”<sup>81</sup>

However, as the long and bitter political conflict between the CPP and the Ashanti-based National Liberation Movement (NLM) flared up again, which the British had tried to channel into the forms of Westminster-style parliamentary democracy, along with the tensions between the government and the Ga minority in the Trans-Volta Region, Nkrumah began implementing the first “measures of a totalitarian kind,” to

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<sup>78</sup> Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, p. 15.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>80</sup> As quoted in Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 133.

<sup>81</sup> Nkrumah, *I Speak Of Freedom*, p. 107.

suppress centrifugal forces and oppositional groups.<sup>82</sup> These actions led, as one official of the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) noted in 1958, to “the first [...] difference between Ghana and the United Kingdom since independence.”<sup>83</sup>

In particular, British and Western press resented the expulsion from Ghana of a local correspondent of a UK paper as well as of two Moslem political opponents, who the government claimed were also citizens of other African countries.<sup>84</sup> As Sir Robert Jackson, head of Ghana’s Development Corporation, worriedly pointed out to a group of External Affairs officials from Canada in October 1957, these events “generated considerable antagonism toward the Ghanaian regime, the so-called [...] ‘pilot plant of African democracy.’”<sup>85</sup> If the situation arose in which the British Governor-General were put before the dilemma to put his signature under further authoritarian measures, such as limitations to the freedom of press, Jackson added, “Ghana [...] may well have reached the point of no return.” For this reason it was crucial, he concluded, for Commonwealth and Western countries “to influence the Nkrumah Government’s position” with technical aid and other forms of assistance, to show “their interest in Ghana’s welfare” and reduce “the impression of Britain’s overwhelming influence on Ghana,” so as to pre-empt by this way a drift of Britain’s “Ghana experiment” towards a totalitarian kind of regime.<sup>86</sup>

## **Money Matters, Part 1: The Soviet Threat and British Aid**

As Ghana became independent, Nkrumah made it clear that the country would seek a neutralist foreign policy, based on “positive non-alignment” in international affairs, and centred on the search for African independence and unity.<sup>87</sup> However, Western

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<sup>82</sup> Nkrumah, quoted in Rivkin, *Africa and the West*, p. 6.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, DO 35/9408, Brief for Mr. Ian Harvey, Commonwealth Relations Office (henceforth, CRO), 10.02.1958.

<sup>84</sup> Commenting in a radio broadcast on these events and the international attention they had drawn to Ghana, Nkrumah said: “When the international press and radio comment on our affairs [...] I hope that they will constantly strive to increase their understanding for our problems. I also hope that they will appreciate the responsibilities which face us — a new nation — working in an almost blinding limelight of world publicity.” PRAAD, RG 17/1/10, 24.09.1957.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Hall, Clarence W. “What Is Happening to Freedom in Ghana.” *Readers Digest*, December 1959.

<sup>86</sup> TNA, DO 35/9408, Meeting With Sir Robert Jackson, 07.10.1957.

<sup>87</sup> Speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations, during his visit to the United States in 1958, Nkrumah stressed in particular three traits of the “African personality” he was trying to build in international affairs with the other

and in particular British influence remained overwhelming in the first years, and it can rightly be said that until 1960, Ghana's non-alignment favoured the West against the East.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, the friendly reception Nkrumah had given to the Soviet and Chinese delegations during the days of the independence celebrations, and rumours according to which the Russians had offered Ghana a large aid package in exchange for the rapid establishment of diplomatic relations, triggered great concern in London that a young African nation, craving for aid and investment capital and led by a nationalist with thinly concealed socialist tendencies, would not be in the condition to resist the wiles of the sly communist diplomats.<sup>89</sup> The British knew that there had been a debate in the Ghanaian cabinet about the Soviet request for diplomatic relations, but for the time being the Western-friendly ministers had managed to avert the danger; Foreign Minister Komla Gbedemah warned though that the Russians would surely "return to the charge before long."<sup>90</sup>

Since the Bermuda bilateral meetings, shortly after Ghana's independence, the United Kingdom and the United States had agreed to keep a common line in The policy towards Africa, with the main aim "to keep the Communists out of Africa." However, John Foster Dulles told Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd that they were "a little disturbed [...] that the new state of Ghana planned to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR," which in their view would "provide the Soviet Union with a perfect opportunity to move into the West Coast of Africa."<sup>91</sup> As of the first contacts between Ghana and the Soviet bloc, the necessity to keep the "Ghana experiment" on track came to be viewed not only in terms of Britain's decolonization, but also as a Cold War issue. In a lengthy report written to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, the British High Commissioner in

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independent African states: African freedom and independence; non-alignment; and the search for economic development. PRAAD, RG 17/1/10, 28.07.1958.

<sup>88</sup> Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 110.

<sup>89</sup> The British were always aware of Nkrumah's Marxist leanings. According to Apter, "indeed, one of the reasons that Britain granted self-government to Ghana was a general fear that delays might promote radicalization." Apter, Ghana's Independence: p. 6–22.

<sup>90</sup> TNA, DO 35/8657, Accra to CRO, 14.03.1957.

<sup>91</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 18, Memorandum of a Conversation, 23.03.1957.

Ghana, Ian Maclellan, stressed that Ghana needed “positive attraction by the West. Without it she could certainly be an embarrassment, and possibly a danger.”<sup>92</sup>

Britain’s responsibility in this sense was, in his view, self-evident:

It would be sheer delusion to suppose that with both our constitutional responsibility for Ghana and our financial commitments at an end we may sit back and expect to see affairs taking a course in the direction we want without positive intervention. We have launched an immature state, likely to become weaker, rather than stronger in the years ahead unless it is helped. In essence, the course recommended in this despatch follows logically from our previous Gold Coast policy. To counter the various elements leading to instability the forces making for continued stability and close association must be strengthened.<sup>93</sup>

Maclellan recommended avoiding the impression “that we are running after Ghana to give her help,” or encouraging any sort of financial-economic ‘extravaganza,’ such as, in his view, the guarantee for a fund of £30 million Nkrumah had asked Her Majesty’s Government to provide for the development of the Northern Territories. The Ghana government should draw first on its own resources, especially for the Volta River Project [see chapter 2.2]; then, if the Ghanaians furthered some more “orthodox” requests for “a modest and sound development programme [...] it would seem desirable to encourage such prudence by giving some help.” Ghana needed to be shown that it was “still worth while to keep on good terms with Britain and the United States.”<sup>94</sup> Yet what could be Britain’s role, in the face of its well-known balance of payments difficulties?

At the Prime Ministers’ Commonwealth meeting in June 1957, Nkrumah warned his colleagues that now that Ghana was independent, “there would be considerable pressure on the Government to run down [the sterling] balances in order to finance development programmes,” and that “unless some alternative form of financial assistance was made available [...] it might be difficult [...] to continue to contribute to the sterling pool as Ghana had done in the past.” However, Britain at the time had a significant trade imbalance, and rumours circulated of another possible devaluation of sterling after the one in 1951; this risk of Ghana withdrawing its sterling reserves

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<sup>92</sup> TNA, DO 35/9427, Maclellan to Home, 16.04.1957.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

seemed thus the lesser evil.<sup>95</sup> The Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear that the United Kingdom's economic policy priority was "securing a stable currency and a satisfactory balance of payments," and encouraged the other Commonwealth countries to seek a maximum of investment from sources outside the sterling area.<sup>96</sup>

For Ghana this sounded as a confirmation that, like the British government had announced in 1956, the Volta scheme would have to be realized for the most part with non-sterling resources, but also that London was not interested in any major infrastructural project or capital aid initiative.<sup>97</sup> The responsibility to keep Ghana oriented towards the West with capital aid was practically delegated to the Big Brother in Washington, where Ghana's Finance Minister was currently busy trying to convince the aluminium multinationals, the US government and also the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, the World Bank) to support the Volta River Project. For some time, the political and cultural guidance by Britain and the Commonwealth countries, coupled with the promise of US capital, managed effectively to keep the "Ghana Experiment" in line.

## **Money Matters, Part 2: The £200 Million That Were a Little Less**

On the eve of independence, Nkrumah boasted that during the years of his rule as prime minister, between 1951 and 1955, "the Gold Coast contributed a net positive balance of £153 million to the gold and dollar reserves of the Sterling Area. [...] Though the Gold Coast is a small country it has made a significant contribution to maintaining the stability of the Sterling Area."<sup>98</sup> Of course, this was only one side of the medal — as Foreign Office functionaries were quick to note in their reports, in the same period while the Gold Coast had a payment surplus towards the dollar area

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<sup>95</sup> Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 27.

<sup>96</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/2/291, Minutes, 26.06.1957.

<sup>97</sup> The CRO made it clear that any resources London might be willing to make available for the Volta River Project would be taken out of the general pool of resources for Ghanaian development, and not be added to other technical assistance or other aid initiatives, TNA, DO 35/9427, Snelling to MacLennan, 24.05.1957.

<sup>98</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/10, Government Policy Statement, 05.03.1957.

and Western Europe, it was in deficit for the Sterling Area.<sup>99</sup> In any case, it was a fact that the Gold Coast had accumulated, especially in the cocoa boom years, large reserves, which were mostly held in British treasuries and securities in London. To how much amounted exactly these reserves, and under which conditions they were held, even Ghana's minister of finance was not really sure.

The Ghana government knew that the investments the Gold Coast had made in England were of three kinds: a) direct governmental funds; b) reserves of the Cocoa Marketing Board, the agency responsible for the purchase and sale of cocoa; and c) holdings of the Currency Board. For the first category, investments for about £73 million had been made, for the other two, about £40 million each. In November 1957 Gbedemah came up with the idea that Ghanaian reserves presently held in securities with nominal rates of about 2½ per cent should be sold and reinvested in other, more profitable deposits. Professor Arthur Lewis, one of the top-development economists of his days, who had been hired as economic policy advisor by the government, considered this idea “simple-minded” and “foolish,” and told Nkrumah so. After a Cabinet meeting, it was decided to send both, Gbedemah and Lewis, to London, to verify the state of Ghana's financial reserves.<sup>100</sup>

Much to their surprise, Gbedemah and Lewis found out that, because of the increased rate of the Bank of England and market fluctuations, the governmental funds had suffered depreciation for about 15 per cent, and were worth now only £61 million, while the holdings of the Cocoa Marketing Board were down by 20 per cent, standing at about £30 million. Moreover, much of the government funds were held in securities with maturity dates in the late 1960s and early 1970s, making it difficult to sell them now for something more profitable. The news came of course as a shock to the Ghanaians, who had “relied upon the expertise of the Crown Agents” for their

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<sup>99</sup> TNA, DO 35/9427, Ghana Development Plans and Public Finance, n.d.

<sup>100</sup> TNA, DO 35/9427, Snelling to Lintott, 28.11.1957.



investments, and now felt they had been let down by Her Majesty's financial advisers.<sup>101</sup>

Ghana did not withdraw from the sterling pool after hearing that it had lost about £20 million of reserves because of ill financial advice, but the trust in the Crown Agents, and in the British in general, was clearly shaken.<sup>102</sup> Nkrumah complained that before leaving London, Gbedemah announced that Ghana would entrust a panel of independent experts with the task to make a study on the "general principles of an appropriate investment policy." The committee was appointed two months later, led by the former director of the Bank of England, Lord William Piercy, which shows that until Gbedemah remained minister of finance, Ghana's confidence in advice from London, despite this incident, remained strong on financial matters.<sup>103</sup>

Lord Piercy finally presented a report in 1959, recommending to resort to more short-term securities, avoiding though drastic sale of securities for cash.<sup>104</sup> However, by the end of the 1950s, as the constitutional change to a republic was on the march, Britain's political influence in Accra was diminishing, and with it, influence on financial issues. Before losing totally the control, and seeing pro-Eastern figures take over, the British even preferred to encourage the appointment of a West German as Director of the Bank of Ghana.<sup>105</sup> In any event, as it is often reminded that at independence Ghana held reserves for £200 million and run them down in less than ten years, it is fair to add: £200 million — less 20.

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<sup>101</sup> The Crown Agents replied to the criticism by saying they had just carried out instructions coming from the Accountant General for Ghana, *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Still in 1961, Nkrumah complained publicly that "If it had not been for the depreciation in the market value of our sterling securities — which resulted from the methods of monetary control operated by the United Kingdom Government, and the injudicious manner in which some of our sterling reserves have been invested for us in the past — our reserves to-day would be at least £G.15 million greater." TNA, PREM 11/3369, "Ghana: The Budget," Snelling to CRO, 31.08.1961.

<sup>103</sup> *Financial Times*, 28.02.1958.

<sup>104</sup> TNA, DO 35/9427, Note, Dorman, 21.04.1959.

<sup>105</sup> PA AA, B34 73, Aufzeichnung, Harkort, 19.08.1959.

## **Ghana's Pan-Africanism and British Policy in Africa**

When Ghana became independent in 1957, Britain was already “an experienced practitioner of decolonization.”<sup>106</sup> It had suffered the loss of the American colonies in 1776, granted Canada self-rule in 1867 and then Ireland in 1921, made Egypt and Iraq independent kingdoms in 1922 and 1932 respectively, and severed colonial ties to the Indian subcontinent and Burma in the immediate post-war years. There were hardly precedents though for what Britain, followed by France and Belgium, intended to do in Africa and in the West Indies after 1957, namely creating an number of nation-states out of dependencies with little experience in Western-style statehood and government. In principle, in all territories the procedure resembled what had been the experience of the Gold Coast: the progressive passage from direct rule on the part of the Governor assisted by a legislative council in which representatives of the native population were admitted, to self-rule in internal matters, until finally to full independence, ratified by an act of the British parliament in Westminster.<sup>107</sup> That's why the example of Ghana was of such importance.

Since Ghana had hosted in 1958 first the Conference of Independent African States and later the All-African People's Conference, to which representative of nationalist movements from all over the continent were invited, Downing Street had understood that Nkrumah's famous dictum that Ghana's independence was “meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa,” was not mere rhetoric — Ghana at the time was a political force to be reckoned with.

One of the most complicated situation London in those years tried to get hold of in the dismantling of the Empire was that of Eastern and Southern Africa, where relatively large colonies of white settlers had established, and where racial relations were tense. The British tried in these areas to spur federations of its colonies that would hold the neighbouring states together once independence was achieved. One of these experiments in political regroupments was the Central African Federation,

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<sup>106</sup> Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 31.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33

known also as the Federation of the Rhodesias (today's Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (today's Malawi), established in 1953 and dissolved ten years later.

In August 1959, Nkrumah came to visit to London, and both Prime Minister Macmillan and Secretary of State Home tried to involve him in their plans for Central and Eastern Africa, or at least to pre-empt as much as possible interferences and improvident initiatives. In regard to the Federation between the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, Britain's prime minister said that the main problem was "how to keep ordered arrangements going in a multi-racial society," and that he hoped "it would not be necessary to draw attention to the difficulties. Of course," he added, "it might be that people would take the view that they must make their case in public; that was one way to deal with the problem. The other way was to try to solve it."<sup>108</sup> Nkrumah's answer to Macmillan's suggestions was not put to the record, but it is clear that the British were wary of his insistence on "fixing dates" for the decolonization of the remaining African colonies.<sup>109</sup>

By 1959, the gap between Britain's pragmatic, non-ideological and piecemeal approach to decolonization, and Ghana's militant stand, expressed through initiatives at UN level, was widening. As Nielsen has pointed out,

Once the time for decolonization had arrived, Britain was prepared and willing to accord meaningful independence to the African territories. In doing so, there was no grand design but only a hope for orderliness, gradualism, and a desire for the maintenance of economic and commercial ties as well as of friendly and cooperative political relationships. The method, as it was, by which Britain pursued its somewhat amorphous goals was expediency and pragmatism.<sup>110</sup>

Discussing with Ghana's Foreign Minister Ako Adjei, few weeks after the meeting between the prime ministers, Lord Home showed some discomfort at Ghana's

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<sup>108</sup> TNA, FO 371/138173, Record of a Conversation, 10.08.1959.

<sup>109</sup> The two PMs also came to speak about the question of French Africa policy, which concerned Britain insofar as it was considered, along with rest of the West, guilty by association for the war in Algeria and the French nuclear tests in the Sahara. Macmillan tried to put a good word for France, saying that "General de Gaulle was really a liberal man whatever some of his advisers might say," and that for Algeria, which in his view the French had administered "very well," the only solution was "a multi-racial society to take account of the million Frenchmen there." Nkrumah seemed little impressed by these words though, and retorted that "the French colonial system was very reactionary whatever General de Gaulle's own policies might be." Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 73.

activism on colonial issues inside the African bloc at the United Nations. When Adjei said that Ghana might join some initiatives at UN level to press for a date for Tanganyikan independence to be set, since the independent African states considered Tanganyika a relatively advanced territory, Home retorted that Tanganyika was “by no means far advanced,” rather backward at the educational level, financially in bad shape, and slow to implement constitutional reforms. “It would be a great pity,” the Secretary of State stressed, “if speeches were to be made in the United Nations in ignorance of these facts.”<sup>111</sup>

Along with many other of its fellow African states, Ghana was embarking though on a policy of advocacy of political rights for the oppressed peoples of Africa and Asia, and ideological principles expressed in impassioned speeches and high-sounding declarations lay at the heart of this policy. As one of the CPP’s foreign affairs officials of that time recalls, Ghana’s “militant diplomats” accepted diplomacy and ideology as “inherently and inseparably identical as agencies of the ‘Cold War,’” and tried to develop own ideological principles as opposed to the great powers’ political philosophies. In this they were aided by the moral support they received from many foreigners, especially African-American and European activists.<sup>112</sup>

The British, with their typical pragmatism and non-ideological moderation, were out of touch with the radicalized leadership of the new Africa.<sup>113</sup> Although Africa still abounded with conservative-minded élites, there was at that time, in the words of one contemporary observer, “an underlying inclination toward radicalism” in the new political élites, with which the outside world had to deal with:

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<sup>111</sup> TNA, FO 371/138173, Record of a Conversation, 01.09.1959.

<sup>112</sup> “The liberation movements on the West Coast of Africa had already shown vigorous signs of contact with African-American protest movements on the West Coast of Africa across the Atlantic. This initiated a new era in Trans-Atlantic relations with African liberation movements, which served to stimulate political thinking, deepen political consciousness and animated the drive for the mobilization of mass support, hitherto unknown to the nationalist forces mainly identified with the African intelligentsia. It led to the creation of more dynamic leadership profiles imbued with daring and more challenging disposition to confront the forces of colonialism [...]” Heymann, Charles. *The Politics of African Diplomacy and Decolonization*. Accra: Joycum Press Ltd., 2009, p. 82-83.

<sup>113</sup> According to Nielsen, “the diversity of conditions, issues, and political atmospheres” in Africa’s various regions “led to an unwillingness to set specific timetables, to an abhorrence of generalized policies and principles, and a consequent tendency to deal with problems as they arose in a case-by-case, piecemeal, and practical basis.” *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 73.

In the climate of opinion in the West, the key words are moderation, stability, and orderly progress. Most Westerners are therefore out of tune with the radical spirit of Africa's leaders and are unable to view it with the necessary understanding. This is the greatest of all our problems in learning to deal with the new states of Africa.<sup>114</sup>

As of 1960, the "Ghana experiment" thus began turning against Britain's policy towards Africa. The differences related in particular to British policy in southern Africa, where Ghana feared new South Africas would arise if the British chose to leave the Rhodesias, Nyasaland, Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda in the hands of the white settlers. As one Ghanaian put it to the British High Commissioner: "We know there is nothing we can do about the racial policies of the South African Government, much as we hate them, because the Union is independent; but the future of East and Central Africa still rests with you, and you have a conscience, so we hope that by bringing continuous pressure on you we can do something for our brothers over there."<sup>115</sup> Speaking in front of the National Assembly, on 16 December 1959, Nkrumah responded to the accusations that Ghana was becoming "a centre for anti-colonial agitation":

There are many people in and outside Africa, who attribute the recent disturbances in Nyasaland, in the Congo and in other colonial territories of Africa, directly to the deliberations which took place at the All-African People's Conference held in Accra. [...] They view Ghana and the development of nationalism in modern Africa with alarm and increasing apprehension.

On our part, *I wish to say that this accusation is perhaps the greatest tribute that the enemies of African freedom could pay to Ghana* [Italics added]. [...] I wish to say in clear and unmistakable terms, that Ghana has no apologies to render to anybody; nor have we any excuses to make. Let me reiterate that our policies have been directed towards the total liberation of Africa from foreign rule. We accept this charge without demur, and we shall pursue it without rancour or violence, because of our unflinching faith in the inalienable right of all peoples to be free.<sup>116</sup>

Ghana's radical pan-Africanism and vocal anti-colonialism clashed head-on with British attempts to implement a gradual, orderly and moderate decolonization in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, which would hold into account the interests of the white settler minorities. The activism of the joint Afro-Asian bloc at the United Nations, supported by Moscow and Beijing, culminated in the General Assembly

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<sup>114</sup> McKay, Vernon. *Africa in World Politics*. 1962 Repr. New York: Harper and Row, 1963, p. 23.

<sup>115</sup> TNA DO 35/9408, Snelling to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations (Home), 05.12.1959.

<sup>116</sup> Nkrumah, *I Speak Of Freedom*, p. 198.

resolution 1514 of 14 December 1960, which approved the “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.” The declaration condemned “the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation” as a “denial of fundamental human rights,” declared it an impediment to international cooperation, development and world peace, and most important — a serious blow to the gradualist approach to decolonization — it stressed that “inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.”<sup>117</sup>

The pressure of the Afro-Asians and the Eastern bloc for a quick termination of the colonial experience played in fact in the hands of Britain’s Tories, who had by 1960 understood that the type of direct territorial domination which colonialism implied had become financially and politically untenable. After the large victory of the conservatives at the general election, in January 1960 Prime Minister Macmillan undertook an Africa-trip which brought him, as first stop, to Ghana. Here, at a state banquet given to his honour by the now President of the Republic of Ghana, he held for the first time his famous “wind of change” speech, which failed though to draw any attention there — Ghanaians knew that the “wind of change” was blowing through Africa since 6 March 1957.<sup>118</sup> Only when he repeated the discourse in front of a white audience in South Africa the phrase made headlines, thus marking the onset of a tumultuous acceleration of African decolonization during the “Africa Year” 1960.<sup>119</sup>

Yet in June 1960, with the crisis following to the independence of the Congo, the Cold War made its first serious appearance on the African continent, and the ghost of neocolonialism revealed itself in the secession of Katanga. Ever since then, at latest, Nkrumah came to distrust London’s intentions in Africa, even though he would always maintain a sincere affection for the Queen and British culture, and valued the Commonwealth as a forum for North-South cooperation. The divergence of

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<sup>117</sup> General Assembly, 947th plenary meeting, 14.12.1960.

<sup>118</sup> Nkrumah, *I Speak Of Freedom*, p. 203. Nkrumah pointed out that he referred to this as “no ordinary wind, but a raging hurricane,” *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 61.

ideological principles and political praxis between Britain and its first experiment of democracy exportation south of the Sahara would finally culminate, in 1965, in the bitter quarrel over Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).

## 1.2 Britain and Ghana's Lurch to the Left

In 1959, all aspects considered, things still seemed under control as for Britain's "Ghana Experiment." When in August 1959 Ian MacLennan, the first High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Ghana, left his assignment, in his "valedictory review" he did his best to counterbalance the negative comments on Ghana in the British press, stressing instead the positive aspects of the developments in what he called the "pilot plant of democracy in Western Africa."<sup>120</sup> First of all, the High Commissioner wrote, Ghana was a stable and united country: "tribal differences are minor and can be surmounted by a moderate display of force."<sup>121</sup> There had been a long diatribe, in fact, at the time of the constitutional arrangements preceding independence, between the federalists of the NLM on one side, supported by part of the British establishment and press with interests in the Ashanti mining sector, and the centralists of the CPP on the other, supported by Governor Arden-Clarke, who deemed Nkrumah the only leader in Ghana capable of modernizing the country.<sup>122</sup> Now also the High Commissioner conceded that "our system of colonial rule perhaps exaggerated the differences between the units of native administration," and joined Nkrumah's view according to which "it would be inefficient and wasteful for Ghana to be administered under a federalist system."<sup>123</sup>

The second favourable point MacLennan highlighted was Ghana's democratic system, despite the allegations of totalitarianism. Although there was clearly the risk of a "democratic dictatorship" — the CPP was indeed a populist movement with a bent for strong-arm police measures — for the time being the country was being

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<sup>120</sup> TNA, FO 371/138163, MacLennan to CRO, 07.08.1959.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 55-61; cf. Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, p. 35 ff; 250-315.

<sup>123</sup> TNA, FO 371/138163, MacLennan to CRO, 07.08.1959.

ruled through universal suffrage and free elections, and many electoral rounds had proved that its power rested for large part on consent. A third positive feature of Ghanaian independence was the lack of colour bars, which contrasted favourably with other African realities, especially in South Africa. Last but not least, the departing High Commissioner praised Ghana's relatively healthy financial shape: "Ghana's finances have been so far handled reasonably well since independence [...] the Government's financial policy has been sober [...] [and] consistently directed towards interesting Western countries in the development of Ghana."<sup>124</sup>

In conclusion, surely there was uncertainty on the economic side due to the country's dependency on cocoa and ambitious development programmes, especially the Volta River Project, while Ghana's militant pan-Africanism would undoubtedly continue to raise eyebrows in the Western world. Nonetheless, MacLennan reckoned that overall the "Ghanaian Experiment" seemed to be out of danger for the time being: "The Soviet threat, which was much in our minds two years ago, has not materialised, though with the nucleus of a Russian Embassy now established in Accra [...] the threat may before long reappear."<sup>125</sup>

MacLennan's successor proved initially to be more critical of Nkrumah and his political approach. Only three months after his taking office in Accra, Sir Arthur Snelling appeared to agree with the British right-wing press that Ghana, with its internal and foreign policies had let down Britain and the Commonwealth:

To those who in March 1957 expected her to behave like one of her elder and more respectable sisters in the Commonwealth, Ghana is a grave disappointment. When she became independent some people apparently thought that her new constitution, modelled closely on ours but with some safeguards of a quasi-federal character, would suit her well; that she would be able and willing to work a two-party political system on Westminster lines; that she would behave in a properly democratic manner; that she would continue to base herself in most political and economic matters upon our precept and practice; and that she would settle down to pursue her own affairs without making a nuisance of herself internationally.

Instead, Ghana has frustrated the intentions of the authors of her constitution by sweeping away most of the rights of the Regions, and by establishing highly centralised government. Her Ministers have cowed the Opposition [...] there is now virtually one-party rule. [...] There is none of the give and take, or measured courtesy of British Parliamentary conduct. And in external affairs Ghana has turned out to be one of the noisiest members of the Afro-Asian bloc,

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



vociferously critical of the Colonial Powers, the self-appointed leader of a Pan-African movement which is already coming to exercise influence in many parts of this continent [...], and at times a sharp thorn in the flesh of the United Kingdom.<sup>126</sup>

In the course of 1960, while seventeen African territories became independent members of the United Nations, in what was known thereafter as “Africa Year,” Ghana abandoned monarchy in favour of a presidential republican system. Britain’s worst nightmares about Ghana turning loose and drifting into the Soviet orbit seemed to materialize. After twelve hair-raising months, a well-informed *Times* article, which it is worth quoting integrally, summarized with great efficacy the British point of view on the situation:

The arrest of more members of the Opposition in Ashanti is a further indication of the pattern which government is assuming in Ghana. During the whole of 1960 Ghana has been sliding in a direction which naturally causes anxiety in Great Britain. The slide is due partly to economic, partly to diplomatic, causes. The mining industry and much of the consumer goods trade is still in the hands of European companies. This has helped to stimulate a movement towards economic nationalism. This in turn has stimulated a move towards cooperative economic systems which appear to derive their origin from examples behind the Iron Curtain, although prototypes in Israel may also have had their influence. In August a loan agreement for the equivalent of some £15m. sterling was concluded with the Russians. Appended to it was an agreement by which numbers of Russians technicians came into the country in order to examine development schemes (most of which have probably been examined and rejected by British technicians at one time or another). Little in the way of economic aid has been forthcoming from the United Kingdom. Delay over a decision on the Volta River scheme, to which DR. NKRUMAH has all along been heavily committed, has been crucial.

On the foreign affairs side there has also been a gradual drifting away. French politics undoubtedly play a major part in West Africa, whether in the former British or the former French territories. Thus the failure of the French to settle the Algerian crisis and their insistence in exploding atomic devices in the Sahara have contributed to the estrangement of Ghana. On these and other problems, particularly in connexion with South Africa, the tendency of America, Britain, and other countries of the west to “gang up” in Ghanaian eyes has produced a state of discontentment with the west.

The independence of the Congo, the mutiny of the Force Publique, and the entry of a United Nations force brought to head tendencies which were already in existence. Ghana committed itself very heavily to a foreign policy which involved the support of MR. LUMUMBA as the central authority in the Congo. This policy has collapsed. The blame is being put on the western powers. All these pressures have combined to set Ghana on a path which probably is not irrevocably, but has great dangers.<sup>127</sup>

This piece sums up in few lines the complex set of issues that brought, between 1959 and 1961, to a progressive estrangement between Ghana along with a group of

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<sup>126</sup> TNA, DO 35/9408, Snelling to Home, 05.12.1959.

<sup>127</sup> *The Times*, “Dangerous Paths,” 21.12.1960.

other more or less radical African states on one side, and the Western powers on the other. For one thing, the spectre of neocolonialism, which haunted the economically-weak countries of recent or upcoming independence in Africa, had begun to materialize. In Ghana large portions of the economy were still firmly in the hands of British firms, while the civil service and the armed forces relied heavily on British personnel; the former French colonies, largely dependent on French subsidies and military support, all maintained, with the exception of Guinea, strong ties to Paris; in the Congo the hand of the Belgian government and Anglo-Belgian mining interests were all too visible behind what happened in Katanga after the chaotic independence of June 1960.

For many an African leader upholding preferential commercial ties with Europe, now running through the European Economic Community (EEC), as well as close political links and military agreements with the former ‘mother country,’ provided reassurance and comfort in the view of the precarious state of their newborn countries. For Nkrumah though, this state of affairs represented the negation of the two principles on which he had built his political philosophy and action, namely: (1) “Seek ye first the political kingdom, and all things shall be added unto you,” which implied that formal political independence would bring economic sovereignty and prosperity for the former colonized peoples;<sup>128</sup> and (2) “our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa,” which thus postulated the end of colonialism, racialism, and neocolonial influence in Africa.<sup>129</sup> In early 1960, speaking to a crowd at the West End Arena in Accra, Nkrumah made it clear that he would not consider the struggle for the liberation of Africa terminated even when all territories had finally reached their formal political independence, since the cunning imperialists were finding new means to pursue with their domination on the developing nations:

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<sup>128</sup> The quote paraphrases Matthew 6:33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

<sup>129</sup> The entire phrase, part of a speech held by Nkrumah after the Union Jack was lowered and the flag of Ghana was raised for the first on 06 March 1957, is the following: “We have done with the battle and we again re-dedicate ourselves in the struggle to emancipate other countries in Africa, for our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent.” Nkrumah, *I Speak Of Freedom*, p. 107.

The colonial powers and their imperialist allies are beginning to advance a new, subtle theory [...] to safeguard their position in Africa and to beguile and bamboozle the Africans. They are prepared to grant political independence but, at the same time, they are also planning to continue to dominate the African territories in the economic field by establishing control over the economic life of the newly independent African countries. [...]

Under certain conditions, the colonial powers are prepared even now to grant independence to many of their territories. As independent states, these territories are supposed to acquire international personality and establish diplomatic relations with other states and also have representation in the various international organisations, including the United Nations.

Once this stage has been reached, the devil of colonialism will put all its energies into establishing control over the foreign relations and policies of the new African states, and thus make it difficult or even impossible for the African people to work together to establish a Union of African States. The new policy or concept of ‘conditional independence,’ which the colonial powers are now planning to adopt, is a policy which is intended to create several weak independent states in Africa. These states are designed to be so weak and unstable [...] that they will be compelled by internal as well as external pressures to continue to depend upon the colonial powers who have ruled them for several years. The weaker and the less stable an African state is, the easier it is for the colonial power concerned to dominate the affairs and fortunes of the new state, even though it is supposed to have gained independence.<sup>130</sup>

Clearly, when Nkrumah spoke out against the balkanization of Africa and neocolonialism, his main target were the political élites in the former French colonies in West Africa who were preparing to take over the reins of power from the French, remaining though tied in manifold ways to tutelage by Paris. However, it is conspicuous that the British too could easily fall into the categories of “imperialist allies of the colonialists” and “economic imperialists.” Fact is, the British were still exerting a great deal of influence in Ghana, but at the same time not expanding their investments or technical and capital aid as much as Nkrumah would have liked, even less supporting his plans for immediate decolonization in Africa, African unity, and fight against white supremacy in Southern Africa. The rest of the developed Commonwealth countries had also failed to react on Ghana’s proposals to establish some sort of stability mechanism for the price of cocoa, or to create a technical assistance scheme for Africa on the lines of the Colombo Plan for southern Asia.<sup>131</sup>

Thus far, Ghana had on the whole lived up to its role of African poster boy. In order to appease anxieties in London and Washington, and avoid endangering the negotiations for the Volta scheme, Accra had delayed the establishing of diplomatic

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<sup>130</sup> Nkrumah, *I Speak Of Freedom*, p. 200-201.

<sup>131</sup> Nkrumah, *I Speak Of Freedom*, p. 100. Cf. TNA, DO 35/8761.

relations with the Soviet Union until 1959, while a Ghanaian ambassador was accredited in Moscow only in the summer of 1960.<sup>132</sup> Now the CPP government, somewhat disappointed by the West, began intensifying contacts and commercial exchanges with the Soviet Union and the more industrially advanced Eastern bloc countries, such as Czechoslovakia and the GDR, to demonstrate Ghana's independence from Britain and the capitalist countries, and expand trade, investment and capital aid possibilities.<sup>133</sup>

In May, the newly-accredited Soviet ambassador in Accra arranged for a Ghanaian high-level political delegation, composed of three ministers and a number of parliamentarians, to visit the Soviet Union and meet Khrushchev. The trip was a success for the improvement of Ghanaian-Soviet relations. Though Ghana's Minister of Economic Affairs, Kojo Botsio, remained cool when the Soviets showed the delegation the American U2-aircraft recently shot down in their skies — in the visitors' book he just marked: "I have seen the aircraft wreckage"<sup>134</sup> — the members of the delegation were all rather impressed by the achievements of the Soviet economy and technology. Rumours began spreading that the Russians were ready to step in the Volta River Project in case of difficulties with the United States, as they had done for Egypt's Aswan dam. It was agreed that Khrushchev would pay a visit to Ghana, and in exchange, Nkrumah would come visit the Soviet Union in 1961.<sup>135</sup>

Nervousness grew in Whitehall. High Commissioner Snelling recommended, first of all, to keep cool and avoid panicking. Young, postcolonial states like Ghana, he argued, "fairly well insulated from non-British influences" during colonialism, tended to begin their independent existence "with something of a sense of claustrophobia and with a lively curiosity about the outside." In a first phase, "active Western nations [...] begin to satisfy that curiosity," while the Russians are left out, since "our indoctrination in Colonial days has induced the leading politicians [...] to adopt a

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<sup>132</sup> For this, and for the fact that many more Ghanaians were going to the West for education and training rather than to the socialist countries, the Ghanaian government earned criticism on the part of left-wing intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, TNA, FO 371/143448, Moscow Embassy to Foreign Office, 28.01.1959.

<sup>133</sup> TNA, FO 371/146801, Snelling to CRO, 18.08.1960.

<sup>134</sup> TNA, FO 371/146801, Moscow Embassy to Foreign Office, 17.05.1960.

<sup>135</sup> Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 102.

wary attitude towards Soviet blandishments.” At a later stage though (“phase two”), “Russian offers of loans, of trade arrangements [...] and of skilled technicians come at what Ghana regards as the right moment. For she, like India, is neutralist. India accepts aid from the East as well as from the West. Why, Ghanaians ask, should not they do likewise?”<sup>136</sup>

While Snelling had previously bashed the CPP’s internal and pan-African policies, now he took a more pragmatic and self-critical line. He stressed that Ghana’s interest in help from the Soviet Union was physiological, and that the West needed to act quickly, especially in terms of aid and technical assistance, if it didn’t want to lose the image competition with the communists:

During the last three years, our deliberate policy has been to refrain from actively encouraging Ghana to seek technical assistance from us. In this period we in Britain have each devoted to aid of all kinds to Ghana three-farthings [three-quarter of a penny] a year. Of that, over one half-penny has consisted of capital assistance to an Institute of Technology; with benefit of hindsight, we can now see this to have been an unpopular activity which brought us little thanks or kudos. Our technical assistance in Ghana has cost each of us under a farthing a year. As the first of our Colonies in Africa to become independent and to stay within the Commonwealth, Ghana is necessarily something of a show place. She is regarded widely as a test case of the way in which we conduct relations with countries we used to rule. We can, I think, no longer preserve our position here and keep the Russians at bay for a farthing.<sup>137</sup>

To be sure, in that period the great Western powers took interest in Africa mostly when it looked like it could become another open front in the Cold War. The Soviets made a big gesture when, as it was announced at the end of August, they granted Ghana a 160 million roubles credit — £14,5 million — as part of an economic and technical cooperation agreement which provided for mineral surveys, hydroelectric projects (smaller than the Volta scheme though), food and fish processing factories, the organization of model state farms, and various other technical ventures. Moreover, as was announced shortly thereafter, Ghana was purchasing at a favourable price four Ilyushin-18 aircraft for the newly-established Ghana Airways

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<sup>136</sup> TNA, FO 371/146801, Snelling to CRO, 18.08.1960.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

fleet.<sup>138</sup> In the context of intensified Soviet activism in the Third World, and Cuba drifting steadily into the Eastern orbit, every gesture of non-aligned leaders of friendliness towards Moscow, or the display of solidarity between the Afro-Asians and the communists, was seen in the West as sign of a tightening encirclement by hostile forces, and produced at times improvident reactions.

In September 1960, upset by what he considered Western interference in the Congo crisis, Nkrumah held a strongly anti-colonial speech at the opening session of the UN General Assembly [see chapter 2.1].<sup>139</sup> He also made some gestures of cordiality towards the Soviet leader Khrushchev, who had just upset Secretary-General Hammarskjöld and the West by providing planes and trucks to Lumumba's government in the Congo to wage a military offensive. Without even listening to Nkrumah's entire speech, the US Secretary of State called the press and made a blunt statement, alleging that Ghana had proved "definitely leaning towards the Soviet Bloc."<sup>140</sup> Things seemed to be getting out of hand. While still in May, speaking with Macmillan, Nkrumah had offered Ghana's help to stabilize the situation in Guinea and the Belgian Congo, now a big chill fell upon the relations between Accra, Washington and London.

At this point, High Commissioner Snelling took to his typewriter and drafted two lengthy reports, dealing with the relations between Ghana, Britain and the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a whole. In these quite significant documents he rang the alarm about the dwindling chances Britain and the West had to keep Ghana out of the Soviet orbit, if they continued in their present policies. Since the reports provide a serious analysis of the reasons for which Ghana's view of the West deteriorated to the extent it did, and because of the debate they spurred inside the Foreign Office and among British and Western policy-makers, it is worthwhile to give them a closer look.

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<sup>138</sup> TNA, FO 371/146801, DO 165/23. The purchase price for the aircraft was two and a half million sterling, to be repaid over eight years.

<sup>139</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Fifteenth Session, Official Records, 869th Plenary Meeting, 23 .09.1960. [http://research.un.org - document GA\\_1960\\_NL600698](http://research.un.org - document GA_1960_NL600698) [15.06.2015].

<sup>140</sup> Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 165-166.

In Snelling's view, the reasons for Ghana's "lurch to the left" and growing "disillusionment with the West" had to be found in three main and interlinked categories of causal factors: (1) international issues; (2) reasons regarding Ghana's bilateral relations with Britain as former colonial power; and (3) internal developments. In regard to the first category, the British diplomat criticized that with its contradictory policy towards Africa, "the West set the scene for the entry of Russia on to the Ghanaian stage."<sup>141</sup> The events he referred to were the same which had been the object of previous reports:

France disregarded African opinion by her atomic tests in the Sahara, by her bad faith towards Guinea [...] and by her failure to bring peace to Algeria. The United States appeared to be sustaining France in her Algerian war, as well as practising racial discrimination within her own borders. Belgium failed to train the Congolese to manage their own affairs. Portugal, another NATO ally, showed the intention of hanging on her African "Provinces" indefinitely. South Africa was intensifying her racial discrimination [...]. The policy of the West appeared to be to treat Africa as a political extension of Europe. [...] In Congo as elsewhere, the Western Powers have seemed in Ghana's eyes to be putting NATO considerations first.

In this constellation of real or perceived imperialist attitudes on the part of the NATO powers, Great Britain's own policies and voting pattern at the United Nations, together with minor but psychologically significant bilateral incidents, reinforced the bad image of the Western countries in Ghana.<sup>142</sup> It was however on the economic side that Britain, together with the United States and West Germany, had contributed the most to Ghana's "disenchantment with the West":

The first indictment was that the West had failed to provide Ghana with any significant part of the capital she needed for development. For nine years she had been told that if she was good she might get her Volta. So she had been on her best behaviour, husbanding her reserves, avoiding any action which might intimidate overseas capital, abiding by all the canons of financial purity, and generally following Western policies in financial and trade matters. But the talks and negotiations went on and on, and her patience grew thin. Meanwhile, Ghana received little capital from the West for any other purpose. The American investment was negligible. The West Germans talked about credits which somehow never seemed to materialise. From the United Kingdom Ghana had high hopes; much had been said at the time of independence in Westminster about how important it was that our first Black African Colony to become independent should not thereby cease to be eligible for aid from us [...] But loans for

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<sup>141</sup> Here and in the following, TNA, DO 195/4, Snelling to CRO, 01.12.1960.

<sup>142</sup> Snelling referred to, in particular, "constant criticism of Ghana in some British newspapers, the barracking of Dr. Nkrumah during a public meeting in London in May and the assault upon the Ghana High Commissioner in London." Ibid.

development from the United Kingdom Government to Ghana since independence had been nil. [...]

Moreover, the working of the sterling area arrangements seemed to her [Ghana] to confer one-sided benefits; whilst she failed to get new money for development from the United Kingdom, British banks continued to collect from Ghanaians deposits greatly in excess of their advances and investments in Ghana, and to lend the balance to the United Kingdom. Even to moderate Ghanaians, this nexus of economic and financial relationships presented a picture of our virtually monopolising Ghana's import trade, deriving short-term capital from her, and failing in return to provide her with significant amounts of long-term capital. *To the extremists, it seemed that we were "exploiting" Ghana* [italics added].

The Soviet Union took advantage of this estrangement by African countries like Ghana. The Russians operated, in Snelling's words, with suasion tactics at three different levels: (1) "tourist" initiatives, i.e. "red-carpet, all-found, trips behind the Iron Curtain"; (2) economic initiatives, such as increased purchase of commodities, development loans, and various forms of aid; and (3) propaganda, especially through print material, but also in the radio. Through all these means, "the Communists reaped tremendous dividends."

To be sure, Soviet penetration and anti-Western mood were abetted and accompanied also by internal political developments, such as the advent of the republic, and the rise to influence of "young and very Left" figures, such as Boateng, Amoako-Attah, and Goka.<sup>143</sup> The British resented the role as presidential advisor of one fellow-citizen of theirs in particular, the already mentioned Bing, who in the High Commissioner's view "exercised a powerful and malign influence."<sup>144</sup> While prominent left-wingers in the party, like Adamafo, the Secretary-General, or Tettegah, the boss of the Trade Union Congress, were on the rise — including the leading group of the Bureau of African Affairs (BAA), passed on from George Padmore after his death to A.K. Barden — friends of the West like Gbedemah or the Briton Robert Jackson were losing ground in terms of influence. The only "moderates" left in position of influence were Nkrumah's economic adviser

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<sup>143</sup> At the time, respectively Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Minister of Labour and Cooperatives, and Minister of Trade.

<sup>144</sup> "After producing for Dr. Nkrumah the new republican constitution, Mr. Bing proved himself indispensable during the first three months of Congo as a man who saw what needed to be done [...] Throughout this period I never saw Dr. Nkrumah once without Bing being there too [...] His advice was indistinguishable from that of the Kremlin. Now he is out of favour and on leave in England; there is talk that he may not return, and I hope it is true." TNA, DO 195/4, Snelling to CRO, 01.12.1960.



Immanuel Ayeh-Kumi, who owed his position to being a relative of the president; and the British expatriate head of the army, General Alexander, who Snelling considered “the President’s insurance policy against a possible *coup d’état* by an Army discontented at Left-wing trends.”<sup>145</sup>

For Snelling, whether this trend continued or not depended upon what the West and especially the United Kingdom decided to do. And so, in his second, subsequent report, he proposed a new policy for Anglo-Ghanaian relations, beginning with the abandonment of three misconceptions: (1) that “Pan-Africanism is contrary to our interests”; (2) “that African neutralism is Soviet-inspired”; (3) “that Ghana supports the policies of the Soviet Union. The truth is the other way round: certain policies of the Soviet Union chime with African thinking.”<sup>146</sup>

While he argued that the British should acknowledge “the depth, sincerity and permanence of African feelings about Colonialism, racialism and neutralism,” the High Commissioner insisted that keeping pace with the charming offensive of the East would require spending more money, time and attention to Ghana than had been done in the first three years of independence. The sum proposed thus far by Her Majesty’s Government as participation in the Volta scheme — £5 million — should be tripled; technical assistance programmes scaled up; allocations for sponsored trips to Britain increased; anti-Communist propaganda efforts at the level of press, radio, publications, and exhibitions, strengthened. The report ended with an outright plea:

To keep Ghana out of the Communist orbit and in the Commonwealth is going to involve our spending more money and more time and effort than we have hitherto spared for her. Will it be worth while? I believe the answer to be yes, and that we cannot afford to do otherwise. *If our first Black African Colony to become independent goes to the bad, our political reputation will be undermined* [italics added]. The critics will not have difficulty in maintaining that the blame, at any rate in part, is that of the Commonwealth Relations Office for the policy of post-independence neglect. And Ghana, because she is English-speaking, and because her influence in Africa is out of all proportion to her size, will become a far more dangerous source of infection than Guinea to other parts of British and ex-British Africa. Prophylactics are cheaper than therapeutics; the cost to us in terms of finance, manpower and perhaps even military effort of counteracting the effects elsewhere in Africa of Ghana going the way of Guinea or Cuba will be immensely greater than that of the modest proposals in this despatch. [...] If we make up our

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<sup>145</sup> “Thus, while British influence has been declining in every other sphere, it has been steadily increasing in the Armed Services.” Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Here and in the following, TNA, DO 195/4, Snelling to CRO, 01.12.1960.

minds we can still beat the Russians in this corner of the Commonwealth. But we have very little time.

To be sure, High Commissioner Snelling wrote from his point of view of diplomatic representative of the United Kingdom in Ghana; yet how typical was his view of British thinking in general on this matter? As seen from Downing Street and Whitehall, Ghana was in fact only a fraction of the problems Britain had to face, between economic slowdown, balance of payments difficulties, European integration, Cold War tensions, and decolonization issues. Nonetheless, Ghana undoubtedly still possessed at that time a symbolic value which made it a valuable prize in terms of Cold War propaganda; if it were to pass over to the other side, the British too would have their 'Cuba', with all the possible consequences for the situation in the Congo and in the rest of Africa.

Snelling's two reports on the situation in Ghana did not fail to spur debate. In Whitehall various objections were put against the High Commissioner's arguments. Some of his colleagues said that the British "had in fact done their best to help Ghana," and that little more could be done without encountering repercussions elsewhere.<sup>147</sup> In view of the recent independence of Nigeria in particular, a state more populous and in many respects less developed than Ghana, it seemed that "it would be too blatant to assist Ghana on the scale proposed unless we are prepared to help Nigeria" as well as "the rest of the underdeveloped Commonwealth."<sup>148</sup> Others argued that it was in fact pointless for Britain to show too much activism in Ghana, as it was mainly Nkrumah's responsibility to prevent excessive Soviet penetration; until he decided to do so, "the Ghanaians will be able to play us off against the Soviet indefinitely and exact from us a price in terms of capital aid which is quite out of proportion to our resources on the one hand and to the political and economic importance of Ghana on the other."<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> TNA, DO 195/4, Clutterbuck to Secretary of State, 09.12.1960.

<sup>148</sup> TNA, DO 195/4, Greenhill to Moreton, 28.11.1960.

<sup>149</sup> TNA, DO 195/4, Alport to Secretary of State, 29.11.1960.

Apparently, it was common thinking in the Foreign Office that Ghana's drift towards the left was a spontaneous, inevitable decision which the regime would have taken no matter what the United Kingdom or the other Western countries had done: "Can this development be positively blamed on the omissions or commissions of the U.K.? Would it, for instance, have made any real difference if the U.K. had put-up more investment, or given more technical assistance? Surely the answer must be 'no' [...]. Is it likely that an increase in Western aid will prevent Ghana going to the Russians? I do not believe that it will."<sup>150</sup> Not only was there the fact that Ghana, one of the most prosperous African countries, might have been able to finance its development from its own revenues and reserves, if the government decided to curb "prestige" expenditure; many questioned the very axiom, inherent in Snelling's propositions, that Ghana was a crucial theatre in the Cold War, and a key for influencing African political orientation: "We are asked to display more active sympathy for the Ghanaian and African point of view in African affairs. This is assuming that the two are identical. But they certainly are not. Behind Nkrumah's policy for Africa there is more personal ambition than appeals to many of the other African leaders. Is there any valid reason why the U.K. should support a Ghana-first policy?"<sup>151</sup>

Between December 1960 and January 1961, Whitehall's machinery of consultations and meetings was put to work. Snelling arrived in London and had the chance to discuss with his colleagues from the CRO, but also from the Foreign Office and the Exchequer, the recommendations he had put forward.<sup>152</sup> In these meetings, he did his best to advance Ghana's point of view, and support the argument that Ghana was worthwhile spending more money, more time, more effort, in order to "keep it out of the Soviet orbit." Snelling was not "prepared to agree with the school of thought that considered that Ghana would move automatically further to the Left,

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<sup>150</sup> TNA, DO 195/4, Davies to Moreton, 06.12.1960.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Snelling met, among others, with the Minister of State, with Sir A. Rumbold from the Foreign Office, and attended an inter-departmental meeting on the Ghana issue, TNA, DO 195/4, Africa Committee, 09.02.1961.

whatever was done to try to counter this tendency.”<sup>153</sup> The “big question” which he tried to raise was “whether Ghana should be written off as a total loss or whether an attempt should be made to save her for the West.”<sup>154</sup>

Despite the scepticism among the CRO as to Ghana’s goodwill and good faith, in the end the Africa Committee agreed that “U.K. policy should be to prevent any further deterioration of relations, both by working for a better understanding of Ghanaian susceptibilities and by a wider and more thorough exposition of the U.K.’s own difficulties and of her actual political aims.”<sup>155</sup> However, the High Commissioner failed to bring home to the British foreign policy élite that Ghana needed a further injection of capital, besides to the £5 million which had already been granted by the British government for the Volta scheme:

While officials agree broadly with the Commissioner’s assessment of the swing to the left in Ghana, they cannot go all the way in accepting his conclusion that Ghana will be lost to the West unless we compete with growing Soviet economic and technical aid activity blow by blow. The fact is that as the former Administering power, we had a head start in Ghana. The Russians are now breaking our monopoly. We cannot prevent this; nor have we the resources to match their economic propaganda effort £ for £. Nor does Ghana with her substantial reserves stand in real need of further large scale capital aid. While, therefore, we shall step up our technical assistance and try to increase the number of sponsored visitors coming here [...] neither the Africa nor the Development Policy Committees feel able to accept Sir A. Snelling’s recommendation that we should make a further sizeable loan to Ghana at this stage.<sup>156</sup>

## **Means of Influence? The BJSTT and the Commonwealth**

Thus in 1961 Britain began an attempt to win back to some extent the trust and the influence it had lost in Ghana over the previous year, with means though that did not imply any drain of badly-needed capital. The military was one of the areas where England could make its presence felt while at the same time satisfying Nkrumah’s craving for prestige. Ghana’s armed forces were virtually non-existent at the time of independence. With British help, the Ghanaians had built up two brigades of army strength, among which were the first troops to arrive in the Congo as part of the UN

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<sup>153</sup> TNA, DO 195/4, Record of Meeting, 19.12.1960.

<sup>154</sup> TNA, DO 195/4, Africa Committee, 09.02.1961.

<sup>155</sup> TNA, DO 195/4, Draft brief, n.d.

<sup>156</sup> TNA, DO 195/4, Africa Committee, 09.02.1961.

contingent during the Crisis. However, Nkrumah was still trying to reinforce rapidly the strength of the terrestrial forces, as well as to create a nucleus of air force and navy. In order to increase the number of Ghanaian trained military personnel, a British expatriate training mission, called British Joint Services Training Team (BJSTT), was created in 1962 at the request of the Ghanaian government.<sup>157</sup>

The Ghanaian-British military cooperation, which had been working slowly but well since 1957 — there were 470 British officers and non-commissioned officers in Ghana in 1961<sup>158</sup> — was put to the test as Nkrumah's plans for a build-up of the armed forces overlapped with Ghana's policy of non-alignment, rapprochement with the Soviet Union, and radical pan-Africanism. Nkrumah, who "like most civilian political liberals [...] [had] no concept of the real cost of an armed force," entrusted his chief of defence staff, General Alexander, with the task of building up the military services.<sup>159</sup> However, "British training was slow, meticulous, and expensive" — Alexander thought that Ghana could send at most one hundred school-leavers to military training in the army, and that it would take not less than five years to "train and expand an officer corps with the experience to take over completely from the British expatriates."<sup>160</sup>

Yet Nkrumah was on hurry to expand Ghana's military capabilities so as to be able to contribute to the African High Command, which he saw as the nucleus of a continental liberation army. So after his trip to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1961, he proposed that as many as four hundred cadets be sent for training to Russia, a proposition that provoked the sharp protest of General Alexander.<sup>161</sup> In the face of resistance within the armed forces themselves, and practical difficulties in realizing the project, Nkrumah stuck however to the idea of a Soviet military training mission, working in parallel with the British and the Canadians. In a letter of 4 October 1961,

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<sup>157</sup> See TNA, WO 32/19256, "British Joint Services Training Team, Ghana: terms and conditions of service."

<sup>158</sup> TNA, DO 195/6.

<sup>159</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 89.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Alexander was sacked shortly thereafter in the context of a general wave of "Ghanaization" of the armed forces FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 230, Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, (Rostow) to President Kennedy, 13.09.1961.

he tried to reassure Britain's Prime Minister as to Ghana's intentions, minimizing the Russians' role:

With regard to the U.S.S.R., I am hoping to buy ammunition from them, as they are prepared to supply us on credit; and if this deal materialises, it will be necessary to invite a team of Russian military experts to train a number of officers and men in the use of this ammunition [...]. I appreciate the difficulties with which you may be faced by the simultaneous presence of U.K., Canadian and Russian military missions in Ghana, but I can assure you that the presence of the Russian experts is solely connected with the introduction of U.S.S.R. manufactured ammunition; and I trust that it will be possible for them to perform these tasks in close cooperation with the U.K. and the Canadian Military Training Teams.<sup>162</sup>

Of course the British knew very well it would make no sense to train the Ghanaian army, who were equipped with British-made weapons, in the use of Soviet ammunition. Soon enough though the idea began circulating that Nkrumah wanted the army reorganized, with three brigades trained by the British and the Canadians under the command of the Army Chief of Staff Ankrah, and a fourth brigade, trained by the Russians and put under the direct control of the Chief of Defence, General Otu, to be employed in the liberation struggles in southern Africa, or wherever the African Casablanca powers decided they would have to be employed.<sup>163</sup>

The Russian-trained brigade in the end never materialized, although the Soviet Union took over in 1964 the task to train Nkrumah's Presidential Guard. Together with the nightmare of being possibly sent to fight white mercenaries in Rhodesia, Soviet influence haunted though Ghana's armed forces until the fall of the regime. So while the British kept exercising great influence on Ghana's military, the progressive estrangement between the latter and the regime, which culminated in the 1966 coup d'état, prevented this to become a politically useful instrument, at least to exert leverage on Nkrumah and his entourage.

There was another, inexpensive way for keeping Ghana tied to the West — the Commonwealth. Nkrumah cared very much for this odd club of countries with the English Queen as head of it, and valued “the access the organization gave him to

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<sup>162</sup> TNA, DO 195/30.

<sup>163</sup> TNA, DO 195/30, Keeble to Chadwick, 31.01.1962.

British leaders, and the platform which membership gave him on world issues.”<sup>164</sup> Although as of 1960 Nkrumah came under increasing pressure by other African leaders to relinquish this last formal bond to Ghana’s former colonial power as a sacrifice on the way to African liberation and unification, he always understood that the periodically-held prime ministers’ Commonwealth meetings were not a stage for radical rhetoric, rather a useful stage for extra-African foreign policy. On such occasions, Nkrumah always put on display his character of elder African statesman and moderate, respectable leader, and was by this way able, together with the other Afro-Asians, to push items such as disarmament and racialism up on the agenda, which otherwise would not have been such a priority.<sup>165</sup>

At the prime ministers’ meeting of March 1961, Nkrumah’s somewhat rambling perorations on how the arms race problem between the superpowers could be overcome, and the proposal of placing three deputies to the side of the UN Secretary-General, one for each bloc and one for the non-aligned, left even the other left-oriented neutralists such as India and Ceylon cold.<sup>166</sup> However, the issue of disarmament occupied a large part of the meeting’s final communiqué, and most important, the joint pressure of the Afro-Asians, but also of Canada, brought finally South Africa to withdraw spontaneously from the Commonwealth, before a motion of exclusion could be put to the vote.<sup>167</sup> Time would come when Ghana’s own membership would be put to question, in view of the transformation of the CPP regime in an outright socialist dictatorship.<sup>168</sup> For the time being though, having avoided to push too hard for an expulsion of South Africa, leaving this to be settled through Pretoria’s own withdrawal, it seemed that Ghana was still, when it chose to be, a nationalist but moderate international player. Nonetheless, as of 1961, the value of the “Ghana Experiment” for Britain and its effort to change the Empire into a free

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<sup>164</sup> Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 171.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>166</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/2/293, Minutes.

<sup>167</sup> While the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand recommended caution, Canada’s head of government Diefenbaker made a strong intervention on the issue of apartheid, declaring that “this policy was repugnant to the Canadian people,” and urged for some “public recognition of the multi-racial character of the Commonwealth.” *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> S. TNA, DO 195/264.

association of moderate, democratic, responsible nations of different ethnic and cultural origins began being questioned, among policymakers and in the public opinion. As the *Manchester Guardian* put it:

The international inflation of Dr. Nkrumah derives from [Ghana's] strategic position in the cold war. Ghana was the first [...] to achieve independence. [...] Her leader thus became to be looked upon by the West, understandably but wrongly, as the architect of African independence and as the natural leader of an African 'bloc.' [...] Perhaps he is just a man to whom too much deference is paid.<sup>169</sup>

### 1.3 From the “Pilgrimage to the East” to Her Majesty’s Visit

In 1961, Ghana’s swing to the left reached its full momentum. This development took place as the result of, among other factors, a heightened struggle between the left wing and the right wing of the party, an internal political dispute which threatened to upset also the delicate equilibrium of Ghana’s non-aligned foreign policy. High Commissioner Snelling christened this power struggle, in which external observers wrestled to understand where the president stood, “The Battle For Power.”<sup>170</sup> The issue over which the battle broke out was a typical problem of all African public administrations, namely corruption. As Birmingham has pointed out, in fact this was not so much an endemic feature of African societies, as was often inferred by the imperialists, rather a by-product of colonial rule:

One of the most harmful legacies of colonialism was the material lifestyle of its white rulers. In countries with national incomes of a few hundred pounds per head expatriates expected to live in more than bourgeois comfort. When they orchestrated a transfer of power to a national bourgeoisie molded in their own image they transferred the expectation of a similar lifestyle. This was partly unconscious and partly a deliberate creation of cultural values which would have beneficial consequences in terms of diplomatic solidarity and commercial intercourse. The consequence was a catastrophic polarization of wealth in Africa. African bureaucrats expected to drive private cars when those of the much richer Soviet Union went by bus and those of China had to save for years to afford a bicycle. Scaling down the expectation of the élite was a thing that few African politicians were hardy enough to attempt.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 17.09.1961, as quoted in Thompson, Ghana’s Foreign Policy, p. 183.

<sup>170</sup> TNA, PREM 11/3369, Snelling to CRO, 17.05.1961.

<sup>171</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 84.



Nkrumah did actually attempt various times to bring under control the phenomenon of rampant self-enrichment and nepotism among bureaucrats and party bosses. One of these was the so-called “Dawn Broadcast,” a radio speech held at the early hour when Ghanaian heads of family typically speak out on important issues, in which Nkrumah castigated corruption and announced that limits would be set on businesses and properties that CPP-members, parliamentarians and ministers could hold. The speech and the measures announced were received favourably by the public, although they ultimately failed to seriously tackle the phenomenon. From the point of view of the West the problem though was that the party’s left-wing zealots took the chance to start a press campaign against prominent members of the “bourgeois wing,” the natural dialogue partners of the Western countries, which they accused — and often they were not wrong on this<sup>172</sup> — of being among the most corrupt politicians in the country:

Mr. Gbedemah was accused of using his position of Minister of Finance to induce expatriate banks to lend him large sums of money to run the biggest poultry farm in the country; Mr. Botsio was criticised for building himself one of the most spectacular houses in Accra; Mr. Krobo Edusei was castigated for his wife’s jewellery, his champagne parties and his joy riding, and there were even veiled references to the *droit de seigneur* he and his friends are said to exercise on Ghana Airways hostesses. There were other newspaper attacks upon C.P.P. parliamentarians [...] Mr. Baah, the leading business Member of Parliament, who had previously clashed with the Left wing, was singled out. The image the Left wing succeeded in creating was of the identification of private enterprise and capitalism with self-seeking and corruption.<sup>173</sup>

Legitimate doubts can be raised as to whether all leftist puritans practiced as righteously as they preached. However, they managed to convince the president that corruption was a by-product of capitalism and a legacy of colonialism, and therefore that a socialist revolution would purge the country of this evil. Or perhaps it was Nkrumah himself who had secretly started the entire campaign. In any case, the campaign against bourgeois lifestyle and corruption risked to backfire and even to touch the sacred person of the president himself: a moderate member of parliament

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<sup>172</sup> The big shots of the right wing and in Nkrumah’s entourage were notorious for the wealth they amassed. As Birmingham recalls, “Ayeh Kumi owned twelve houses, Asafo-Agyei fourteen, and Krobo Edusei twenty-seven.” The latter purchased also a golden bed for his wife, which he had then to relinquish because of the uproar the episode caused. Kwame Nkrumah, *The Political kingdom*, p. 196.

<sup>173</sup> TNA, PREM 11/3369, Snelling to CRO, 17.05.1961.

warned that: “when you want to fell a big tree, you first cut down or weaken the small trees around it so that when you finally deal a blow to the tree itself it falls down with ease.”<sup>174</sup>

Perhaps put on alert by such warnings about the ambitious Marxist clique, Nkrumah avoided a complete purge against the right wing, among whom were some of his oldest fellow-travellers. In fact, he announced that henceforward he would take over the role of Secretary-General of the CPP, previously exercised by Adamafo, while in the subsequent reshuffling of the cabinet, the only minister dismissed was the unfortunate author of the above mentioned warning. However, while important moderates such as Botsio and Edusei retained their positions, Gbedemah, Ghana’s man in the West number one, who had conducted all the main negotiations for the Volta River Project in the United States, was demoted from minister of finance to minister of health.

So while the leftists were not really satisfied, Gbedemah’s retrogression showed that Nkrumah was very much intentioned to pursue a non-orthodox economic policy based much more on socialist principles than it had been so far. This, of course, did not fail to raise eyebrows in Britain, especially among the businessmen, who worried about the possibilities of investment in Ghana;<sup>175</sup> and of course among the foreign diplomats, who saw the development in the light of the East-West conflict:

This round of the cold war battle in Ghana has ended in a draw. There must be another round before long, perhaps when the financial crisis now looming ahead materialises, perhaps, if discontent grows, even sooner. We of the West may be granted a breathing space to consider our tactics and mobilise our resources. But what are we to do? If we do not help Ghana we leave a clear field for the Russians to appear as her only true friend. If we help her in any way which seems to give support to Messrs. Gbedemah, Botsio, Ayeh-Kumi or Edusei we may be laying up trouble for ourselves. Our best course is probably to continue to work closely with President Nkrumah, who personally is relatively uncontaminated by allegations of corruption. But a dilemma undoubtedly confronts us, and it is one which may before long face us also in newly-independent countries in Africa other than Ghana.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> TNA, DO 195/5, Simpson to Rumbold, 29.05.1961.

<sup>176</sup> TNA, PREM 11/3369, Snelling to CRO, 17.05.1961.

The following round in the tug-of-war between left and right, East and West, in fact didn't take long to materialize. And this time there seemed to be no doubts as to where the Ghanaian president was positioned between the two fronts. As had been rumoured for some time, Nkrumah announced that he would leave for an extended tour of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and Eastern Europe. The trip was the result of the contacts between Ghanaians and Soviets in the summer of 1960. Receiving the delegation from Ghana at the Kremlin, Khrushchev had spoken out the invitation for Nkrumah to come visit him, and Nkrumah had agreed right away, although the visit had to be postponed various times.

In July 1961, the time had come for him to finally give a look beyond the Iron Curtain. In theory, the trip was but the fulfilment of Ghana's non-aligned foreign policy: Nkrumah had already toured the United States in 1958, and met two American presidents, Eisenhower and Kennedy; now it was the moment to pay a visit to their antagonists. However, from the tone Nkrumah took in his speeches, and the extension of the tour — it touched even minor Eastern bloc countries such as Bulgaria and Albania, as well as East Berlin for a "private" visit — to Western observers it soon became clear that the trip was, in fact, a sort of pilgrimage, as various observers did not fail to remark.<sup>177</sup>

Nkrumah was clearly impressed by the achievements of real-existing socialism. The Ghanaian delegation was flattered by the first-class, red-carpet treatment they received, and Nkrumah in exchange began delighting the hosts with anti-imperialist speeches, which caused much stirring in the West though. The British Minister to Hungary Nicolas Cheetham walked out of a reception held by the Hungarian

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<sup>177</sup> "After stopping in Tripoli, the delegation, escorted for the last part of their journey by MIG fighters, landed in Moscow on 10 July 1961. Brezhnev welcomed them and accompanied Nkrumah and his immediate entourage to the Kremlin where they would be staying during their visit. In Moscow, Khrushchev had lengthy meetings with Nkrumah discussing ways in which the Soviet Union could help Ghana, and he also personally escorted them to many of Moscow's great show pieces, including Red Square and the Lenin Mausoleum. At his special request, Nkrumah made a second private visit to the Mausoleum — almost a spiritual pilgrimage. The Ghanaian party then left Moscow for Siberia to visit the site of a huge dam being built on the River Angara. A hectic schedule then took them to Lake Baikal, Tashkent, Kiev and Leningrad. They visited many parts of the country which had been poor and backward at the time of the 1917 Revolution [...] Nkrumah also noted that the Soviets had welded together many people of different colour, race and tongue into a mighty superpower." Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 177; cf. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 173-177.

government to the honour of the Ghanaian delegation when Nkrumah, standing right in front of him, uttered the following words at the address of the Hungarian authorities:

Mr. President, when today I had a talk with you and members of the Presidential Council and the Government, this talk and the past of the Hungarian peoples recalled the memories of the events of our own struggle. For more than a hundred years we languished under colonialist oppressors. I do not wish to review in detail, nor enumerate, the indignity and humiliation we were subject to. All I want to say is that when our people rose with indignation and hatred against all this humiliation committed against them the colonisers resorted to the usual iron first: they imprisoned many of our warriors, persecuted others, and still others were killed in fighting but they did not shake us. We continued to go forward and we continued our struggle until we had won a victory and had attained our independence and sovereignty.<sup>178</sup>

Despite the bewilderment raised in London by these words, in front of the press the CRO decided to play down the incident. Clearly, Nkrumah needed to prove the socialist countries, as well as Africa and the rest of the world that he was not a “stooge of the imperialists,” and that Ghana refused any form of neocolonialism.<sup>179</sup> However, this kind of statements — Nkrumah called Khrushchev “the voice of peace” — showed how little Nkrumah feared British and American counter-reactions, and raised questions in the West as to whether Ghana might possibly abandon the path of non-alignment to become, in exchange for trade, technical assistance and investments on which agreements were signed between the two governments, an ally of the Soviet Union.

Commenting on the trip from Accra, Snelling lamented that it had not “proved to be possible to adopt either of my two chief recommendations — that we should make a bigger financial contribution to Ghana’s development, and that we should cease to provide apparent justification for the belief so widely held here that in African issues we always place the interests of our NATO allies above those of the Africans.”<sup>180</sup> In a rather gloomy report, the British representative pictured how through the increased wooing campaign by the Eastern bloc towards Ghana, “impressions are created that the Soviet Union is the most technologically progressive country in the world and

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<sup>178</sup> TNA, DO 195/5, Cheetham to Foreign Office, 19.07.1961.

<sup>179</sup> TNA, DO 195/6, Moscow to Foreign Office, 08.08.1961.

<sup>180</sup> TNA, DO 195/6, Snelling to CRO, 05.09.1961.

that Communism offers a short cut to rapid economic development.”<sup>181</sup> Although the Russian experts pouring into the country were not popular among Ghanaians because of their lack of friendliness and proficiency in the English language, Snelling spoke though of a “tragic element” in the relations between Britain and Ghana, namely the failure to show reciprocal understanding for the respective claims of moral righteousness.<sup>182</sup>

The High Commissioner acknowledged that there were many legitimate grounds, from the British point of view, for being annoyed and upset over Nkrumah’s rhetoric, and good reasons for advocating a hard line towards Ghana, as many did; he summarized some of the recommendations that people expressed to him as follows:

‘Why should we put up any longer with that two-faced man, Nkrumah, who thinks himself so much larger than life? At home he shows no gratitude for what we have done for his country; he wants Ghana to go Socialist; he locks up his opponents. Abroad he is playing the Communist game. [...] He gets up to subversive activities in other countries. He wants to kick us out of Africa. He opposes us over the Common Market, and has the impertinence to start talking about a Commonwealth without Britain. Much the best course would be for us to kick him out of the Commonwealth. We shall be better off without him.’<sup>183</sup>

Despite this kind of pressures, Snelling urged London to remain calm and not to base policy upon exasperation, but to wait for the outcome of Nkrumah’s extended tour in the East, which would end only in September after the conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade. Moreover, the planned visit of the Queen to Ghana, which had been finally agreed to by the two governments, surely would present many occasions to reinforce the stressed Ghanaian-British relations. And yet, the autumn of 1961 forced the United Kingdom to reflect seriously on its relationship to both Ghana and its leadership, as well as on the role it wanted to play in its former colony, whose

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> “We feel strongly that our policy of giving independence as quickly as we can to our Colonies is enlightened and just; that we have set an example to other Colonial Powers; and that in gratitude and common decency a country such as Ghana, which has been a beneficiary of this policy, ought to speak well of us, publicly recognise the sincerity of our intentions and proclaim that we are following the right course. But President Nkrumah, equally convinced of the morality of his view that Colonialism is wrong and that all Africa must be freed from it as rapidly as possible, genuinely fails to understand how we can possibly expect him to come out in support of us when we do not speak, act and vote against those of our NATO allies who are doing things in this continent of which he considers that we must strongly disapprove because of the very enlightenment of our won Colonial policy.” Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

value for Britain as a “pilot plant” of postcolonial democracy was being increasingly questioned.

## **The Kaldor Budget and the Strike**

While Nkrumah strengthened Ghana’s ties to the Eastern bloc, he pushed forward his agenda to build up the state sector of the economy according to the principles of scientific socialism. For this purpose, he understood that sacrifices had to be made, as the peoples of the East had done, so as to raise the capital necessary to finance development. In order to prepare the country’s finance for the great leap on to socialist development, Nkrumah resorted to the advice of a prominent Western economist, Prof. Nicholas Kaldor, from Cambridge University. The CPP government had always relied on the advice of expatriate advisers: Robert Jackson as head of the Development Commission and later, of the Volta River Authority; Prof. Robert Lewis, from Manchester University, as economic adviser between 1957 and 1958.<sup>184</sup> Ghana’s Minister of Finance Gbedemah had always retained though the final responsibility, together with the president, for the drafting of Ghana’s budget. In the spring of 1961, a critical remark by Gbedemah during a cabinet meeting about led to his aforementioned fall into disgrace. Deprived of the advice of Ghana’s most experienced finance politician, Nkrumah called on Professor Kaldor, who visited Ghana first for ten days in May, and later in June-July.<sup>185</sup>

Kaldor’s evaluation of the state of the Ghanaian economy coincided, interestingly, with Nkrumah’s optimistic one, defying those who pictured a country on the verge of financial collapse due to overheated deficit spending. In Kaldor’s view, the key to keep Ghana’s investment-oriented economic policy sustainable was to keep the country’s external and internal requirements distinct. This meant, in Snelling’s words, that it would have to “meet the external cost of development from external loans and credits; and to finance all other expenditure from internal sources. Ghana would not

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<sup>184</sup> S. PRAAD, RG 17/1/73.

<sup>185</sup> TNA, PREM 11/3369, “Ghana: The Budget,” Snelling to CRO, 31.08.1961.

henceforward draw on her overseas reserves, except *in extremis*, and would take action to improve the current account foreign exchange position [...] by increasing her trade with the Soviet *bloc*.”<sup>186</sup>

However, as Ghana’s external borrowing was almost entirely reserved for the Volta River Project and many other ambitious development and state-building projects, from Ghana Airways to the expansion of the armed forces, this line of economic policy meant that the Ghana government would need much more significant internal revenues than had been the case thus far to finance development. Which is exactly what happened: after the approval of the budget base on Kaldor’s advice, government revenue skyrocketed by about forty per cent.

The measures by which this hike was achieved were a mixture increases and revisions of existing taxes, excises and export duties; increased import duties; new taxes like a purchase tax on consumer durables; and what urban working classes felt more, a compulsory savings system which converted a fixed percentage of wages in national development bonds redeemable in ten years, as well as a wage freeze as a deflationary means. In all, the budget was tantamount to an austerity regime of unheard of proportions which came as a shock both to working and middle-class Ghanaians, especially when they compared this to the promises that had been done by the CPP before and after independence.<sup>187</sup>

Kaldor’s austerity budget created some discontentment inside the British expatriate business community, which was hit by higher import duties, and saw their prospects endangered by the new purchase tax and the compulsory savings, which would certainly reduce the people’s purchase power. The main problem though, which the London’s High Commissioner failed at first to appreciate to its full extent, was political: would the CPP regime be able to sustain the discontentment mounting from

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

below to the financial squeeze, at a time when Nkrumah himself was out of the country, and was not supposed to come back before mid-September?<sup>188</sup>

There had been some harbingers of social unrest right away in July, when the railway workers in Takoradi threatened for the first time to go on strike, and were able to obtain tax exemptions for low-income workers. However, most external observers overestimated the regime's ability to keep things under control in absence of the Osagyefo (Nkrumah's official title now, translated as "Conqueror" or "Redeemer") while they underestimated the reciprocal interaction between social discontent, internal battle for power in the CPP, fight with legal and illegal means of the opposition against the regime, and at the international level, Ghana's increasing unpopularity in the Western world.

The strikes of September 1961 took Snelling by surprise, and apparently Whitehall as well. Whether or not the British information services had received some warnings about what was going to happen, considering the unavailability of MI6-reports at the National Archives, it is not ours to know, but it seems unlikely.<sup>189</sup> The protest, besides to the attempts on Nkrumah's life the greatest menace to the stability of the regime until its final fall, began on 4 September, when the railway workers in the coastal town of Sekondi went on strike to protest against the compulsory savings system and the tax increases, soon to be followed by the dockers of Takoradi. It was the first time since the 1950s, when the country was still under colonial rule, that a protest of this kind was brought directly against government policy.<sup>190</sup>

Over the first days the unrest remained confined to the two nearby towns on the coast, while life went on in Accra as usual, also because the government-controlled radio and press made no mention of the strike. After the conference of the Non-Aligned Countries in Belgrade, Nkrumah went to spend some time in Crimea with Khrushchev. The acting Presidential Commission led by Gbedemah which he had left

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<sup>188</sup> Snelling forecast that "the discontent is not expected to come to a head until about September or October, when the price increases consequent on the additional taxation will have percolated right through the economy." Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Snelling admitted he didn't expect discontent over the budget to erupt so quickly, TNA, DO 195/64, Snelling to Chadwick, 09.09.1961.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Cooper, Frederick. *Decolonization and African society: the Labor Question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996, p. 248-260.



in charge of the ordinary administration, lacking any instruction on the part of the president, decided to wait and see how the matter evolved. However, behind the façade of business-as-usual, a confused situation aroused, made of rumours, intrigues and foreign powers' pressures.

As Ghanaian media observed a strict no-comment policy in the first days High Commissioner Snelling sent on all his advisers, attachés and liaison officers to get some first-hand reports on the situation and “sift fact from fiction.”<sup>191</sup> From the outset of the protest, the British' main concern was what would happen if the army, in which all middle-rank officers, as well as the commander, were still seconded British officers, were called to quell disturbances. On the one hand they had a duty of loyalty towards the Ghanaian government and were supposed to defend it; on the other, the political consequences of white officers ordering to open fire against black African demonstrators, at a time when African-Western relations were already strained by the Congo Crisis, could not be underestimated.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, considering the state of British public opinion towards Nkrumah after his speeches in the Soviet Union, this could become embarrassing for London “if demonstrations were represented in [the] British press as constituting spontaneous uprising[s] against Nkrumah's dictatorial Government.”<sup>193</sup>

Solicited by Snelling, General Alexander, still commander of the Ghanaian armed forces, made it known to London that he thought “it most undesirable that British Officers should be mixed up in Ghanaian I.S. [internal security] activities” and advised that “if I.S. trouble broke out British Officers should be kept in background.”<sup>194</sup> The matter was sensitive, since for November the first visit of the Queen to Ghana had already been scheduled, and deterioration of the security situation, or of Ghanaian-British relations, would put it in jeopardy. Luckily, things

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<sup>191</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, Snelling to Chadwick, 09.09.1961.

<sup>192</sup> TNA, DO 1965/64, Accra to CRO, 10.09.1961.

<sup>193</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, Accra to CRO, 04.09.1961.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., CRO to Accra, 05.09.1961.

never precipitated to the point of making necessary an armed intervention by the military, and sufficient only-black units could be found to guard the harbour.<sup>195</sup>

The question of the army's role in the interior was even more crucial as all kinds of rumours about a possible coup d'état were spreading, which the West followed with interest. The British were in touch in particular with Krobo Edusei, one of the big shots of the party's right wing with a strong constituency in Ashanti, and placed their bets on him as a possible leader of an overthrow; it is difficult to say though to which extent they encouraged him to do so.<sup>196</sup> The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on the contrary were still wooing Gbedemah, who had been rumoured for some time as a possible alternative to the Osagyefo, and tried to convince him to lead a coup which would certainly have been received with favour by those circles in Washington, where Nkrumah was depicted as a communist fellow-traveller.<sup>197</sup>

British and US perceptions clearly diverged on this matter. While the American embassy produced alarming news according to which the strike was about to spread to Accra and the Presidential Commission was ready to oust the president, the British High Commissioner dismissed these reports as "typical American alarmist stuff."<sup>198</sup> In point of fact none of the three Commissioners seemed to dare taking radical action; nonetheless, President Kennedy decided to suspend for the time being the support he had given to the Volta River Project and to wait for the outcome of the internal power struggle to give the final approval [see chapter 2.3].<sup>199</sup>

On 7 September 1961, a ministerial party led by Gbedemah and Edusei visited the town of Takoradi and tried to convince the workers to break off the strike, but lacking

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<sup>195</sup> The political pressure to avoid the involvement of British troops in internal security operations was not well received by either the Ghanaian officers or their British colleagues. The former asked "what use are the British officers if they disappear at crucial moments", while the latter felt that "since they are completely integrated in units and not mere advisers they should take part in any necessary internal security operations." TNA, DO 195/64, Telegram from Accra High Commission to Commonwealth Relations Office, 10.09.1961.

<sup>196</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, Snelling to Chadwick, 09.09.1961.

<sup>197</sup> On 7 September, US Ambassador Francis Russell reported that Gbedemah had said: "I would be sorry to have to do it but country has had enough of Nkrumah's arrogance, whims and madness." FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 230, Rostow to Kennedy, 13.09.1961. Cf. chapter 2.3.

<sup>198</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, CRO to Accra, 07.09.1961. Accra to CRO, 08.09.1961. See also FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 231, Memorandum From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to Secretary of State Rusk, 14.09.1961

<sup>199</sup> See FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 232, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Kennedy and the Acting Under Secretary of State (Ball), 21.09.1961.

power to make concessions, they failed to make any impression on the strikers. In the second week of the strike, the port town was still completely paralyzed. The government, following colonial tradition, issued a state of emergency for Sekondi and Takoradi — the protest was illegal of course under the new rules imposed by the CPP — and sent more police to the harbour. On 14 September a dusk to dawn curfew was also issued, after a train was derailed by sabotage. Adamafo, now Minister for Presidential Affairs, after having met with Nkrumah in Russia, publicly called the strikers “despicable rats,” and threatened them with the loss of jobs and pensions; Tettegah, the trade unions boss, pictured the strike as an attempt of “counter-revolution.”<sup>200</sup>

There were other, minor strikes in Accra and other towns. However, failing support of the unions’ confederation, by now controlled by the CPP or the miners’ union, the unrest never generalized.<sup>201</sup> Since the chances for an overthrow of Nkrumah after the second week increasingly faded, it became clear that the political vacuum created by the absence of the Osagyefo had left even the anti-government strikers without any real political back-up. The United Party (UP), the only residual legal opposition in Ghana, heir of the dissolved NLM, helped the strikers with money, but when they approached the embassies of the Western countries to raise more funds to support the strike, apparently they were not successful, as the Western powers expected an overthrow to come more from inside the CPP than from the small UP.<sup>202</sup>

On 13 September, the British High Commissioner cabled to London that Edusei, who he considered the only figure capable of leading an alternative regime, had opportunistically “changed sides,” switching from the right to the left wing, and they expected him now to remain loyal to the government.<sup>203</sup> Three days later, Nkrumah finally came back from his trip behind the iron curtain. He refused to make any concessions to the demands of the protesters, but the following day he announced in a

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<sup>200</sup> *The Times*, 11.09.1961.

<sup>201</sup> TNA, DO 195/64 “Ghana: Strikes And Their Aftermath”, Snelling to the Secretary for Commonwealth Relations, 22.10.1961.

<sup>202</sup> See also chapter 2.3.

<sup>203</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, Snelling to Chadwick, 13.09.1961.

statement that the state of emergency in Sekondi and Takoradi would be lifted, and called on the strikers to resume their work. Most of the workers initially refused to do this, and made a desperate plea to the Liverpool dockworkers and to the National Union of the Railway in Britain to support their strike.<sup>204</sup> However, on 22 September, short of funds and left without the outlook of any real political change, the railway workers abandoned the strike at last.

Though the president had taken a conciliatory tone in his first speeches, a crackdown ensued, which confirms that the unrest had constituted a real danger for the regime's stability.<sup>205</sup> The unrest was presented as the result of a conspiracy between the leadership of the UP and some union leaders in Takoradi, and it was argued that the strike leaders "were financially dependent upon the National Executive of the United Party and had therefore to accept their guidance on all matters of tactics and policy."<sup>206</sup> About fifty men and women, mostly union leaders, market mammies accused of aiding the strikers, and members of the opposition, including their leader J.B. Danquah, were put under preventive detention.<sup>207</sup>

In December, in order to justify the repressive measures, the government of Ghana published a white paper on the "conspiracy," in which the Sekondi-Takoradi strike was lumped together with a number of other, more or less real, plots orchestrated by the legal or clandestine opposition. To be sure, the opposition meddled with the strike and supported it, and there were plots behind the scenes meant to bring about the downfall of the CPP government, encouraged to some extent by the United States and Britain, although without much zeal. However, depicting the popular dissatisfaction with the government as a pure conspiracy by the bourgeois opposition, supported by foreign powers and interests, was clearly a way to disguise the fact that Nkrumah was not the hero of the toiling masses anymore.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, Snelling to CRO, 19-20.09.1961.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., "Ghana: Strikes And Their Aftermath", Snelling to CRO, 22.10.1961.

<sup>206</sup> TNA, DO 195/65, "Statement by the Government on the Recent Conspiracy", 11.12.1961.

<sup>207</sup> At least some of the workers were released in 1962 and given back their jobs, see Obeng, Samuel, ed. *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah*. Vol. 2. Accra: Afram Publ., 2009, p. 37-38.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 76.

Though the strike did not lead to a regime change, it triggered a purge inside the party and the cabinet of moderate elements. Gbedemah fled the country to escape jail, while moderates such as Kojo Botsio and Ayeh Kumi (temporarily) had to give up their ministerial posts. For Britain, as the aftermath of the strike coincided with the preparations for the visit of the Queen, the moment had come for a reappraisal of its relationship to Ghana. In Whitehall there was disquietude especially for three issues: (1) the loss of consensus for the Ghanaian regime, and therefore, the risk of instability; (2) Nkrumah's political orientation, which seemed to be increasingly influenced by the left-wing, pro-Soviet group of advisers; (3) the press campaign begun after the strikes, which accused the British government and the business world of collusion with the strikers and the plotters, as well as of the death of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.<sup>209</sup>

Against allegations advanced by Adamafo and Tettegah that expatriate business interests had tried to embarrass the government by inciting their employees to stay at home, Snelling submitted Nkrumah a memorandum to prove that all British-owned and managed firms had in fact actively collaborated with the authorities to contain the strike and bring it to a rapid end.<sup>210</sup> However, it was widely known that the UP, who were accused of having fomented the unrest, were all pro-Western and pro-British. In fact, they had even approached the diplomatic representatives of the United Kingdom, the United States and West Germany, asking for funds to support the strikers.<sup>211</sup> This they had failed to achieve — the CRO even suspected this could be a deliberate trap by the CPP to implicate them — but in the rumours-laden atmosphere of those days, the visits of Danquah and his associates to the Western embassies might have added material to the suspicions that foreign powers and interest were behind the effort to destabilize the regime.<sup>212</sup>

As various UK citizens were deported for alleged participation in the unrest, Britain's High Commissioner reported of a tense and nervous situation in Accra: on

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<sup>209</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, Foreign Office to UK High Commissioners, 03.10.1961.

<sup>210</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, Memorandum, Snelling, 22.09.1964.

<sup>211</sup> TNA, DO 195/6, Clutterbuck to Accra, 23.09.1961.

<sup>212</sup> TNA, DO 195/6, Clutterbuck to Accra (2), 23.09.1961; Accra to CRO, 24.09.1961.

the hand, the “atmosphere of Palace intrigue, of whispered suspicion, of schemes for personal and national aggrandisement” at Flagstaff House, seat of the government, which reminded him of “Tudor England”; on the other, the situation in the country, marked by growing disaffection by the ordinary people towards the regime, but at the same time still solid personal power by the president, and limited likelihood of a coup d’état by the army or the police. The only man Snelling considered having “the courage, the energy and the ability to overthrow Nkrumah when he judges the moment to be ripe [...] is Mr. Krobo Edusei.”<sup>213</sup>

## **Ecce Regina**

British-Ghanaian relations seemed to further deteriorate when, without advance notice, General Alexander was abruptly dismissed from his position of Chief of Defence, probably as a reaction to British policy over Katanga, and for the neutral stand of the British army during the September strikes. Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, instructed Snelling to express Her Majesty’s Government “surprise” for this decision, and the concern for the “serious deterioration in the relations between our two countries”; he should also ask if Ghana was about to abandon its non-alignment in favour of an alliance with the Soviet Union, in the case of which Britain would have to review its policy versus Ghana in general.<sup>214</sup> Nkrumah replied in a letter written to Macmillan’s address three days later, in which he denied that Ghana’s foreign policy had changed in any fundamental way, and blamed “the acrimony which has recently developed in the newspapers” on a number of “misunderstandings,” which he was ready though to iron out with Sandys in a personal talk. In the meantime, he appealed to Macmillan for a ‘truce’:

I trust that you will use your influence, just as I will use mine, to discourage the hostile tone of the press of our two countries, and to bring about a better understanding of our problems and our points of view. There is no need for me to tell you that the people of Ghana have nothing but the friendliest feelings towards the British people — indeed I can hardly believe there is any other

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<sup>213</sup> TNA, DO 195/64, Snelling to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 22.10.1961.

<sup>214</sup> TNA, DO 195/6, Commonwealth Secretary to Accra, 23.09.1961.

former colonial territory where individual Englishmen are so much liked and appreciated as in Ghana. The coming visit of Queen Elizabeth II, to which we are greatly looking forward, will, I am sure, furnish ample proof of this — if, indeed, further proof were needed.<sup>215</sup>

The question was not, though, Ghana's attitude versus individual Britons, which was indeed friendly, rather the compatibility of the policies of the Ghanaian government with those of Britain and the West. As many were putting also the purpose of the visit of the Queen in Ghana into question, Sandys accepted Nkrumah's invitation and at the beginning October flew over to Accra to discuss the issue with him.

The Commonwealth Secretary went on to the talks with Nkrumah well briefed by the CRO about what arguments could and should be used, and which rather not. The former included mostly excerpts of Nkrumah's own anti-colonialist and pro-Soviet speeches held during the Pilgrimage to the East; the latter was information related to Ghana's African policy, obtained through confidential sources though which could not be revealed.<sup>216</sup> The tactic worked out: when confronted with his own words, Nkrumah seemed to be anxious to prove that he had not all of a sudden deviated from non-alignment, and stressed his admiration for everything British and respect for England's decolonization policy.<sup>217</sup> Sandys needed some more concrete proof of Ghana's friendship. He proposed to summarize the main points of their talks in a public statement. There was a lengthy see-saw about this communiqué, as Nkrumah insisted to consult his cabinet on this matter, which resisted many points put in by Sandys. In the end, considering that a failure to agree on a joint statement would have probably caused the cancellation of the Queen's visit as well as seriously endangered the already shaky negotiations with the Kennedy administration on the Volta scheme, Nkrumah gave in.

The release of the summary was a significant success for the Commonwealth Secretary and for British diplomacy in general.<sup>218</sup> In the statement, Nkrumah

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<sup>215</sup> TNA, DO 195/6, Nkrumah to Macmillan, 26.09.1961.

<sup>216</sup> TNA, DO 195/7.

<sup>217</sup> TNA, DO 195/7, Secretary of State's Press Conference, 06.10.1961.

<sup>218</sup> Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 188-189.

reaffirmed that Ghana's foreign policy was "based on the principle of non-alignment neither leaning towards the East nor towards the West," thus admitting that its recent stand could have raised doubts in this respect. Moreover, in the text Nkrumah "appreciated the fact that since the Second World War Britain had given independence to nearly six hundred million people and had thereby set an example in the peaceful transfer of power which had been followed to some extent by other Colonial Powers." While he regretted "the inability of the British Government to fix a target date" for the independence of the residual colonial territories, he nonetheless agreed to advise "the peoples of the remaining British colonies to rely on the declared intentions and good faith of the British Government and to press their case for early independence by constitutional means."<sup>219</sup>

Even on the Congo issue, though the two recognized that there had been divergencies on methods, they stressed that Ghana and Britain shared the same aim, "namely to support the United Nations in securing the early re-establishment of the unity and territorial integrity of the Congo."<sup>220</sup> Considering that in recent speeches Nkrumah had declared the possession of colonies incompatible with UN membership, and depicted colonialism as "a fundamental cause of war," it is clear that British pressure had succeeded, at least for some time, in steering Ghana's positions away from militant anti-imperialism and radical pan-Africanism. Sandys knew that that his visit could not have produced a true "change of heart"; yet he was right when he assumed that the Her Majesty's visit "would extend and magnify" the eased atmosphere in the relations between England and Ghana.<sup>221</sup>

The arrival of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip marked the height of Britain's effort to regain the lost influence through emotional bonds and cultural symbols in Ghana. It was in this sense a success, although its impact would not last for long. The preparations of the visit had been marked by a tense and gloomy atmosphere. Few days before the Queen's arrival, two devices exploded in Accra, lightly damaging the

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<sup>219</sup> TNA, DO 195/7, Joint Statement, 05.10.1961.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> TNA, DO 195/65, Secretary of State's Press Conference, 06.10.1961.



statue of Nkrumah outside the parliament and the Freedom Arch at Black Star Square in downtown Accra. These demonstrative acts, clearly meant to sabotage the visit, gave new ammunition to the campaign in the British press that opposed it on the grounds of alleged risks for the Queen's safety.

To dispel these anxieties, Sandys made a second stopover in Accra, insisting with Nkrumah that they both drive in an open car on the route the Queen would take through Accra, followed by a van of journalists, to show that the security situation was under control. This they did, and finally the Commonwealth Secretary seemed to be satisfied that the Queen run no risk of being involved in a possible assassination attempt against Nkrumah.<sup>222</sup> Reassured by Sandys, and conscious that a last-minute cancellation — the visit had been originally announced for 1959 and then postponed for the Queen's pregnancy — might have caused Ghana's exit from the Commonwealth and perhaps its definitive drift into the Soviet orbit, Macmillan gave his blessing to the trip.<sup>223</sup>

The presence of the Queen dispersed for some time the clouds which had darkened the relations between Accra and London. Nkrumah was sincere in his feelings for the British monarchy, British values and habits; many observers of the time in fact "failed to understand the nearly schizophrenic distinction between Nkrumah's anti-imperial rhetoric and his profound attachment to most things British," which is indeed not easy even from today's view.<sup>224</sup> Yet Nkrumah feared that the constant criticism uttered in the British press would influence negatively the outcome of the negotiations with the United States for the Volta scheme. Various British journalists

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<sup>222</sup> "My confidence [...] has been further strengthened by what I saw during my tour of Accra with Nkrumah this morning. The tour had been well announced on the radio and press and large crowds were assembled at many points on the route. We drove very slowly in an open car with very little police protection. We stopped at a number of places and got out of the car including a long walk through the crowded market area. Wherever we went Nkrumah received an enthusiastic and in places rapturous welcome which was obviously wholly spontaneous. The scenes we witnessed this morning must have dispelled in the mind of any objective observer the idea that Nkrumah is a man living in fear of assassination afraid to show his face in public." TNA, DO 195/65, Commonwealth Secretary for Cabinet and Adeane, 07.11.1961.

<sup>223</sup> TNA, DO 195/65, Macmillan to Diefenbaker/Menzies/Holyoake, 07.11.1961.

<sup>224</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 97.

and correspondents were expelled, and the information minister announced that thereafter, all reports who criticized the president would face the same destiny.<sup>225</sup>

In December, few weeks after the Queen's departure, the Ghanaian government published a white paper on the recent anti-governmental plots and strikes. Nkrumah had promised Sandys that there not would be "any serious allegations against British businessmen and still less against the British Government."<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless, the Paper did contain various anti-British accusations: against organs of the press, such as *Times*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, for false reporting and "attempts to bring by the downfall of the government"; charges that "British tax legislation has been aimed at retaining in Britain as much as possible of profits earned by the British Overseas Companies in Ghana"; and most of all, the claim — justified, as we have seen — that British seconded officers were not ready to defend the government of Ghana from internal dangers.<sup>227</sup> Had the effect of the Queen's visit already evaporated?

In this volatile situation, High Commissioner Snelling wrote his valedictory report, after two years in which also his personal relationship with Nkrumah had worsened:

My own relations with him were good for my first 18 months or so in Accra. But then he became suspicious of me because, I am told, of two articles in British newspapers, one implying without any basis of truth that I had been stirring up people in London against Ghana during a conference in May, and the other expressing critical opinions which he suspected came from me and which were actually taken in London from one of my dispatches. So latterly he has been distant with me — friendly on the surface but not genuinely confiding. Any usefulness I may have had in this post has thus come to an end.<sup>228</sup>

His evaluation of the situation could not be but gloomy: in the past twenty-four months, he summarized, "relations between Ghana and Britain have deteriorated sharply." This was mainly due to "the leftward lurch of Nkrumah and of his Convention People's Party Government":

As a result of this [...] life in Accra for a British diplomat has ceased to be enjoyable. Every morning one awakes wondering what shocks the day will bring; what poison the party

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<sup>225</sup> TNA, DO 195/36, Memorandum: the British Press and Ghana. Walker-Brash, 01.12.1961.

<sup>226</sup> TNA, DO 195/65, Commonwealth Secretary for Cabinet and Adeane, 07.11.1961.

<sup>227</sup> TNA, DO 195/65, Foreign Office Telegram, 08.12.1961.

<sup>228</sup> TNA, FO 371/161361, "Ghana: Valedictory Review," Snelling to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 19.12.1961.

newspapers will contain; what further polemics against our policy somewhere in Africa we shall have to endure; what new allegations of capitalist intrigue and counter-revolutionary activity in Ghana will be made against us; what fresh threats to the wide range of British commercial and financial interests will emerge; [...] which British subjects are now to be deported; who is the latest of one's Ghanaian friends to be locked up under preventive detention or to flee the country. In attempting to describe present-day Ghana I cannot improve on the verdict of my predecessor that it is like Renaissance Italy without the culture.

Though he put the main blame on Nkrumah and the CPP, Snelling never ceased though until the end of his mandate to stigmatize the patronizing attitude showed by many of his fellow-citizens, inside or outside the press, with regards to Ghana's political development:

A stable two-party system as we know it does not exist in a single one of the 20 or so newly-independent African states; in none of them [...] is there much future in being in the minority. For Ghana we devised an independence which, in deference to the wishes of the few intellectuals, is based upon the Westminster model, though without either its flexibility or its bicameral structure. It did not work, largely because the idea of a permanent opposition is foreign to African experience. [...]

*These considerations are, however, lost upon the armchair critics and meddling dogooders in Britain who think they know best what Ghana wants — or at any rate what is good for her. Individual journalists, Labour trade union leaders, back-bench Conservatives, Liberals, unite in belabouring Ghana for tyranny and for having departed from the path of rectitude laid down for her by us* [italics added]. People with sufficient sense of responsibility to refrain from calling de Gaulle a dictator do not hesitate so to describe Nkrumah. [...] With little political support, no economic aid, and not many other advantages to show for her membership, there is danger of her being persuaded that the main right conferred by membership of the Commonwealth is the right to be attacked by the British press. [...] All black skins are thin skins, and the Ghana Government is unbelievably sensitive to this sort of treatment. [...] It is difficult to see how Ghana's connexion with the Commonwealth can long survive the irresponsible and arrogant paternalism of Fleet Street.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

## 1.4 De Freitas, Hopes and Disappointment

In the aftermath of the Suez debacle, as has already been argued, “the Tory vision of a multiracial, British-led Commonwealth as a surrogate for empire had been dashed by the President of India, Nehru, who identified with Egypt, not Britain, during the crisis.”<sup>230</sup> In consequence, the British conservatives invested much more on the renewed axis with Washington, and on the integration in the European common market, rather than on developing relations with the multiracial Commonwealth. Nkrumah’s opposition to Britain’s entrance in the EEC and to the association of Africa’s former colonial territories to it stemmed in part from this perceived competition between Africa and the EEC among Britain’s priorities.<sup>231</sup>

To be sure, by 1961 opposition in the British public opinion against Nkrumah and his ruling methods had become too vocal for London to be seriously able to present Ghana as a successful experiment of Westminster-style democracy export to a former colony in Africa. However, there was still some hope that Ghana could remain genuinely non-aligned in the Cold War, as it had always claimed it would, and serve hence as a model for anti-communist nationalism in the Third World — the kind of West-oriented, authoritarian nationalism that Washington as well sought for.<sup>232</sup>

So while the British argued about whether their political experiment in West Africa was still worth fighting for, the destiny of Ghana’s international political orientation lay, in fact, on the other side of the Atlantic, in Washington. Macmillan knew, like everyone in Whitehall, that in case of a negative decision by Kennedy on the Volta River Project, Nkrumah would most probably react like Nasser had done in the case of the Aswan Dam, bringing in the Soviets to carry out what the West had failed to. The British prime minister therefore exerted all the influence at his disposal to prevent this ominous event, which could have had serious consequences for Britain’s

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<sup>230</sup> White, *Decolonisation*, p. 84.

<sup>231</sup> The British tried various times to bring about Nkrumah’s support, or at least his neutrality, vis-à-vis the Common Market, yet without much success, see e.g. TNA, DO 195/5, Snelling to Lintott, 03.06.1961.

<sup>232</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 21, Memorandum of Discussion at the 432d Meeting of the National Security, Council, 14.01.1960.

international image, as well as for its considerable economic interests in Ghana.<sup>233</sup> Luckily for Britain, Kennedy and Dean Rusk were not as prejudiced about Third World nationalism as Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles [see chapter 2.3].<sup>234</sup>

In January 1962, shortly after the departure of Snelling, a new British High Commissioner arrived in Accra, Sir Geoffrey de Freitas. According to Thompson, he held high hopes of being able to turn the tide in Ghana in favour of Britain and the West.<sup>235</sup> What is sure, he tried to reverse the rather gloomy picture painted in Snelling's last reports, focussing more on what Britain still held, rather than what it had lost due to the advances the Eastern bloc, especially at the higher political level. In the first half of 1962, de Freitas wrote various despatches describing the great deal of influence that Britain still exerted in Ghana through such means as the civil service, where British advisers were still held in great esteem; the Ghana Defence Forces, very much Sandhurst-oriented; trade, ever important; technical assistance; and most of all education, where England's cultural influence, all too visible in those days, could be consolidated in the long-term:

We have a number of winning cards, the importance of which is too often overlooked. First amongst these is the common language which gives us a great advantage over our competitors. Secondly, we have a common religion. Although the number of Moslems is growing, Ghana remains under strong Christian influence with Church Schools and institutions such as the Y.W.C.A. run on the British lines. Thirdly, there is our knowledge of Africa and Africans which we have amassed the past century or so, and conversely there is their knowledge of us. British people have a tradition of service in tropical countries and have gained experience of working with peoples of very different races and traditions. Fourthly, there is the extent of our trade and business in Ghana.

The people from the Sino-Soviet *bloc* have none of these advantages. [...] It is a fact that the British — the ex-Colonial masters — are the best liked and trusted overseas community in Ghana. It is pleasantly embarrassing to be driven behind the Russian flag car and in front of the Bulgarian flag car and to have the Union Jack saluted by police and soldiers who ignore all the others.<sup>236</sup>

Even though Ghana's political attitude towards the West remained highly schizophrenic until the very end of the CPP regime, in 1962 it seemed for some time

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<sup>233</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 88.

<sup>234</sup> Mahoney, Richard D. *J.F.K.: Ordeal in Africa*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983, p. 157 ff.

<sup>235</sup> Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 389-390.

<sup>236</sup> TNA, FO 371/161362, "British Influence in Ghana," de Freitas to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 22.06.1962.

that thanks to the positive outcome of the negotiations for the Volta scheme as well as the Queen's visit, its non-alignment had taken on less East-oriented features. In addition, observers reported from Accra of a growing "disenchantment" with the East by Ghana, mainly due to Soviet Union's failure to live up to the high expectations the cooperation agreements of 1960 and 1961 had posed. The Eastern bloc kept buying little of Ghana's cocoa crop, it exported even less products to Ghana, while the fleet of Ilushyin aircraft bought from Russia for £5 million lay idle at the airport in Accra, as they had proved to be uneconomic to fly and service.<sup>237</sup> As the *Financial Times* summed up: "at the very least, the drift away from the West and the growth of antagonism against private enterprises has been temporarily checked. The change of direction — if it proves to be more than just a temporary affair — could be of enormous significance not only for Ghana but for independent tropical Africa as a whole."<sup>238</sup>

To be sure, as a report from the West Africa Department of the Foreign Office stressed, what appeared as "Nkrumah's irrational approach to politics" was most disorienting for orthodox Marxist-Leninists too: "The Queen and Mr. Khrushchev, Marxism and Christianity, the Commonwealth and the Communists Congress — this perpetual dualism of Nkrumah must be as puzzling for the Communists as it is for the West."<sup>239</sup> Moreover, Ghana's foreign policy was always exposed to sudden upsets deriving from changes in the balance of internal power or as a result of the violent struggle between the regime and the by now almost entirely clandestine opposition. While Ghana's de facto — as of 1964, de jure — one-party, centralized state apparently worked well for maintaining the country's territorial unity and overcoming tribal divisions, it did not leave of course much room for internal political dialectics.

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<sup>237</sup> "Sir Patrick Fitz-Gerald, managing-director of the state-owned Ghana National Trading Company, made clear some of the difficulties in this matter [trade with the East]. The Russians, he said, wanted GNTC to buy Russian cars. But what about spare parts? Russian cameras were unsalable; they had no English instructions." Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 276.

<sup>238</sup> *Financial Times*, "Ghana's Disenchantment With The Eastern Bloc," 29.11.1962.

<sup>239</sup> TNA, DO 195/11, "Some Thoughts on Ghana — Anglo-Ghanaian Relations," West Africa Department, 03.08.1962. The Eastern bloc viewed critically in particular the personality cult around Nkrumah's person, and the lack of internal democracy at the higher levels of the party. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 400-401.

Together with the personality cult for the Immortal Leader, the CPP-dictatorship, while comparatively mild in terms of repressive measures, didn't leave safety valves for political dissent and social disaffection, which found then expression in isolated acts of terrorism, conspiracies and plots. The most significant of these episodes, in terms of political repercussions, was probably the 1962 Kulungugu assassination attempt. In early August 1962, Nkrumah travelled northwards to Upper Volta [today's Burkina Faso], to sign customs and commercial agreements with President Yameogo.<sup>240</sup> On his way back to Ghana, Nkrumah and his party made a short stop in a little town right after the border called Kulungugu, where the president was supposed to be gifted with a bouquet from a pupil of a local school. While the little boy was offering the present to Nkrumah in his car, someone threw a hand grenade in the crowd, killing the child and injuring many, including the president, who was first rushed to a hospital in nearby Bawku, and then to a second hospital to recover. Here he then received in the following days his ministers and collaborators, and instructed the press on how to deal with the matter.<sup>241</sup>

The country was put in state of emergency, with hundreds arrests and curfew from dusk till dawn. Yet the British, and also the Americans, noticed that the grenade attack had produced some awkward, contradictory results. On the one hand the government-led media, such as *Ghanaian Times*, *Evening News* and *Radio Ghana*, began a campaign in which the assassination attempt was blamed on the 'usual suspects': imperialists, colonialists, neocolonialists, the main NATO powers. Later, some countries in particular were singled out — Britain, the United States, and West Germany — yet without producing any significant evidence; this naturally led to strong protest by the respective diplomatic representatives.<sup>242</sup>

On the other, the British registered after Kulungugu a friendlier attitude towards Britain by Ghanaian officials, ministers, and high-ranking military, especially after

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<sup>240</sup> Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 218-219.

<sup>241</sup> Nkrumah's wounding, though not severe, was nevertheless kept hidden to the public, so as not to damage the myth of Nkrumah's "invincible, impregnable and invulnerable personality." Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> In the case of Britain, the *Ghanaian Times* hinted that the bombing was consequence of a new type of warfare the British Army was being trained in, which aimed at taking "the battle right into the thick of the crowd." TNA, DO 153/64, CRO, 16.08.1962.

three prominent members of the radical wing — Cofie Crabbe, Ako Adjei, and Adamafio — were detained.<sup>243</sup> At the end of September Nkrumah finally accepted to receive the British High Commissioner as well as his US and West German colleagues. He presented his more lenient side, and denied having the power to influence what the party press wrote: “Can’t you see that I am not a newspaper Editor,” he said, “I am a President.”<sup>244</sup>

This, of course, did not fail to irritate the ambassadors, who all knew very well about the power Nkrumah wielded on the editorial line of the state-controlled media.<sup>245</sup> However, even though the High Commissioner found Nkrumah more instable than ever — he said he looked “tired, overworked and very much on the edge” — all things considered he concluded that “recent events have on balance been favourable to the West,” and that if further radical change were to take place in the near future — the allusion was to a possible coup d’état — it would most probably lead Ghana further westwards.<sup>246</sup> Nkrumah’s overall soft attitude during the meetings with the Western ambassadors, and the reshuffling in the cabinet which had brought back to grace moderates such as Krobo Edusei and Kojo Botsio, induced London and Washington to a moderately optimistic outlook for the coming year, although they knew the Soviet Union would surely try to exploit Ghana’s political difficulties to push further their agenda.<sup>247</sup>

## **The President and the Press**

There is a document, received by the Foreign Office from Accra in early January 1963, which deserves a closer examination at this point, as it touches upon issues directly related to the subject of the present research, and offers a good insight on

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<sup>243</sup> TNA, DO 195/11, Accra to CRO, 18.09.1962.

<sup>244</sup> TNA, DO 153/64, de Freitas to CRO, 21.09.1962.

<sup>245</sup> TNA, DO 195/11, Washington Embassy to CRO, 03.10.1962.

<sup>246</sup> TNA, FO 371/161362, “Ghana: Kulungugu And After,” de Freitas to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 01.1.1962.

<sup>247</sup> “Nkrumah himself may be a doubtful quantity but he is not immortal. The majority of Ghanaians wish the West well and nothing short of a prolonged propaganda onslaught on them is likely to alter this. Within the Government machine, apart from the information side, the majority are by no means anti-West.” TNA, DO 195/11, “Notes for Anglo-American Talks on December 4th-5th, 1962,” 30.11.1962.



how and why the British attitude towards Nkrumah changed in the last years of his rule. Written by a staff member of the British High Commission in Accra, a certain J.D.G. Walker-Brash, this four-pages long report deals with one crucial issue in the relations between Ghana and the West in this period, namely the relationship between political power and the media in Nkrumah's Ghana. Considering that by 1962 power was concentrated mainly in the hands of Nkrumah, and that despite the relatively small readership on the total population the printed means of communication were considered the more influential among the media, the document is quite unsurprisingly titled "The President and the Press."<sup>248</sup>

The report seems to bring to conclusion a number of questions raised among Western diplomats in view of the recent line held by Ghana's party- and government-sponsored media (newspapers and *Radio Ghana*) as well as by Nkrumah himself. They all wondered who stood behind the periodical attacks in the newspapers against the West, whether the left-wing circles inside the party, radical ministers, or even Nkrumah himself.<sup>249</sup> Walker-Brash, without being able to cite "facts" but claiming to have "considerable evidence" on his side produced by the "indiscreet fear-stricken action" of the regime in the aftermath of Kulungugu, was now able to present for the first time a straight answer on this question: the president was, in fact, the puppeteer of all the CPP's propaganda machine. Walker-Brash first recalled the starting point of the High Commission's investigations on this issue:

For a long time we had adhered to the theory that the President, though he more or less tacitly approved of the policies of the Press, did not himself formulate those policies. We believed that he probably derived a small boy's delight in such irresponsible naughtiness, while keeping aloof from it.

The Press was controlled by Information Minister, Adamafo, and Interior Minister, Boateng, with the support of their henchman, Cecil Forde, and the two editors, Heyman and Baffoe. Adamafo, the Russian stooge, was the arch-enemy and if he fell the others would fall too, and the position would greatly improve.

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<sup>248</sup> TNA, DO 194/14, 05.12.1962. S. a. DO 195/11.

<sup>249</sup> "His refusal to accept any responsibility for the Government radio and the party press is a bad sign. Either he cannot control them or he will not. There is no comfort in either interpretation." TNA, DO 153/64, de Freitas to CRO, 21.09.1962.

Now I am convinced that this specious theory was wrong.<sup>250</sup>

Up until his fall from grace with Nkrumah, apparently Adamafio had served as a convenient lightning rod for the anger of the Western countries, where some considered him the main culprit for Ghana's flirtation with Moscow. Now as he was in jail, while the remaining, above mentioned left-wing propagandists were still at their places, it finally dawned on the British diplomats that in fact "Adamafio was never a master; he was one of a team of lick-spittle servants working on the direct orders of the President. When this particular servant's suspect ambitions and personal popularity brought about his dismissal, it did not follow that the rest of the team had to be sacked too."<sup>251</sup>

This is how, based apparently on inside sources, Walker-Brash reconstructed the pyramidal structure of the Ghanaian news production process:

The Press and Radio "Chief-of-Staff" is Cecil Forde, officially Publicity Officer to the President. Each day, the editors of the "Evening News" and the "Ghanaian Times" (the Guinea Press), Eric Heyman and T.D. Baffoe, report to Forde at Flagstaff House. Normally, all three confer with the President, ideas are exchanged, and the President gives his orders regarding the papers for the following day, and for the Radio commentaries. If the President has decided to sack a Minister, then the Press will be instructed to pave the way; or if a victim merely deserves cutting down to size, then a short campaign of abuse against him may be ordered.

The picture of the Ghanaian media emerging from the report — which left a deep impression not only in London, but also in Washington and in other Western capitals — is therefore not that of relatively independent elements inside a complex political arena, but rather willing instruments in the hands of a totalitarian power, populated by opportunists and expatriate communists, carrying out the whims of their supreme commander. It raised interest not just because of the insight it provided on the mechanics of the propaganda apparatus in an authoritarian regime, but especially because of the conclusions it drew on the personality and the state of mind of the Ghanaian president, who was still considered by many a friend of the West after all:

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<sup>250</sup> TNA, DO 194/14, "The President and the Press," J.D.G. Walker-Brash to Walker, 05.12.1962.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

But if the “how” is now clear, the “why” is still obscure. Why does the President insist on controlling the Press himself? Why does he deliberately publish anti-Western invective and communist supplied material? Why does he apparently go out of his way to alienate those countries on which Ghana’s economic future largely depends? Why does he publish idiotic encomia of himself [...]? Here I will put forward a few tentative theories based on a three years’ study of a man’s character.

Like other atavistic, semi-educated demagogues, President Nkrumah has a morbid respect for the power of the Press. Extremely sensitive himself to printed praise or criticism, he believes that to control the Press is to control the minds of the people, and he is determined to keep such power in his own hands. [...]

*In her way of life, sentiments and needs, Ghana is almost irrevocably tied to the West. This, though inevitable, is not what Nkrumah planned in the old, grey days in London and America. For his failure to bring about true neutralism he has to answer to his Eastern bloc friends, to his Pan-African rivals, to his leftist advisers, and, most important of all, to his own dark conscience [italics added].* To some extent, he can answer by demonstrating that public opinion in Ghana, as falsely represented by the Press and Radio favours the socialist (communist) bloc. In other words, he tries to redress the facts that favour the West by theories that point in the opposite direction. In doing this, he rates as small the danger of drastic retaliatory action by the Western Governments. The question as to whether the President personally adheres to the communist doctrines and policies, that his newspapers propagate, is the great imponderable of Ghanaian politics. Certainly, his obsessive hatred of “neo-colonialism” seems genuine enough.

Basically, but consciously, the President hates the white “masters” (this hatred does not include the Russians who have impressed him as his true white “brothers”). I would add that the President himself declared this hatred to the two West German doctors who treated him when he was in semi-shock after Kulungugu. It follows that he enjoys the abuse of the Western powers by his Press and Radio, particularly when the hated British Press can be involved, and probably gains gleeful satisfaction from playing the innocent when envoys protest to him. [...]

I have quoted at length from this letter because it provides, in relatively few lines, a good insight on the spectacles through which Britons and Westerners in general regarded the development of Ghana and its president, as well as, to some extent, an interesting depiction of Nkrumah and his somewhat schizophrenic attitude towards the West.

On the one hand, Walker-Brash’s report clearly demonstrates the amount of arrogance with which many Englishmen approached the matter. Calling a man holding two master’s from US universities and who was on his way, before he stepped into the political arena, to get a doctorate in Britain, an “atavistic, semi-educated demagogue” — Harry Truman, for comparison, never completed his law degree — or hinting at racial motivations for his alleged “hate for the West” while

Nkrumah was surrounded by collaborators and advisers of all complexions, tells a long story on the psychology of the former colonial masters.<sup>252</sup>

On the other, this paper without doubt hits some important nails on the head when it comes to understand why Nkrumah, though an earnest admirer of the British Royal House and of John Kennedy's, conscious of the value of Western capital and expertise for Ghana's economic development, allowed and encouraged West-bashing in the media he controlled. First of all, Nkrumah was truly "obsessed" by neocolonialism, because he wanted more wealth to remain in the hands of Ghanaians, yet considered capitalism unsuitable for African conditions; he was trying to instil socialist ideas in his people, who were mostly small, sometimes relatively wealthy farmers, traders, and middle-class professionals educated on the British model. Anti-imperialist agitation was part and corollary of the ideological indoctrination programme. Moreover, Nkrumah's constituency was not Ghana alone, but the whole of Africa, especially the radicals and the militants, who criticized the Ghanaians for their Commonwealth connection. It is true therefore, as Walker-Brash's dispatch argues, that verbal radicalism in the press allowed Nkrumah to present Ghana as more militantly anti-imperialistic than it actually was.

## **Government by Conspiracy**

In the course of 1963 the analysis of Ghanaian politics made by Western observers was the object of an increasing "psychological turn": what mattered were not fights between groups anymore, or other collective dynamics, rather the psychological conditions of one single man.<sup>253</sup> This turn derived from the evaluation that was made in Western circles of the Ghanaian regime, for which the High Commission in Accra actually coined the term "government by conspiracy":

You asked me when I was in London recently of we could you from Accra some assessment of the present structure of power in Ghana. [...]

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<sup>252</sup> For the issue of the psychological profile produced by the German physicians, see chapter 3.2.

<sup>253</sup> TNA, DO 195/11, J.D.G. Walker-Brash to Walker, 27.11.1962. The CIA too produced a "psychological profile" of Nkrumah to evaluate his motives and aims, Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 92.

This question is, in a dictatorship, very difficult to answer. The Cabinet is not what it seems to be. It is a body in which, as often as not, the President announces new policies to a chorus of approval and then, if any discussion takes place, it relates to modalities. [...]

The truth is that Ghana is run, in a pretty absolute sense, by one man — Kwame Nkrumah. Not only does he dictate the major policies, but he interests himself in minutiae of astonishing detail. The people, apart from him, who really matter, are those who have access to him and for whom, for one reason or another, he has special regard. They are people whom he has chosen and for whom he usually has regard because they are of the same general outlook as himself or because they are absolutely reliable in other ways [...]

It is this group, i.e. President Nkrumah and his clique of selected advisers, who really form the “regime”. In a sense it is “Government by conspiracy”. Indeed if one feels that Ghana is reluctantly being dragged towards the extreme left, government by conspiracy is what is required.<sup>254</sup>

While there can be no doubt that by 1963 the Ghanaian power structure was highly centralized, and that all significant political decisions were made at Flagstaff House, reports like the above quoted seem to imply that Nkrumah enjoyed, in a certain sense, being the lone man at the wheel. As a matter of fact he did not, but he desperately lacked collaborators and personnel he could trust. Being so distrustful of the men in his own party and of his fellow-citizens in general, in the course of the years he took on an ever growing burden of charges and responsibilities, which in turn, together with the assassination attempts, took on a heavy toll on his mental stability. He did, in fact, encourage officials to assume more own initiative and responsibilities, although with little success, like the following reply by Nkrumah to a report by the state farms director shows:

Dear Atta Mensah,

Thank you for your letter [...]. I have read through this report very carefully and if I am to summarise my reaction to it, I would put it into three words: ORGANISE AND PRODUCE. Produce through your own initiative and let action guide you.

For instance, with regard to the comment you made on rubber, what stops you from talking to the Minister of Industries and setting up a factory here in Ghana of the type you talk about that exists in Nigeria? You don't need my approval in this respect. This is your job. Plan with the Ministry of Industries for factories for agriculture. Don't talk to me about finances. Organisation will decide that for you. If the Ministry is standing in your way, ride over it and the result of your achievement will justify your actions.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> TNA, DO 153/59, Cole to Chadwick, 28.12.1963.

<sup>255</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/2/186, Nkrumah to Atta Mensah, 15.09.1964.

So had really Nkrumah “gone round the bend,” like many Western observers claimed?<sup>256</sup> The question might seem trivial, if it were not for the influence that the Soviet Ambassador Rodionov had gained over Nkrumah as of 1962.<sup>257</sup> According to a study based on 1963 data, “Ghana was the 'fifteenth friendliest state' to the Soviet Union, an enumeration leaving few states between Ghana and the states of Eastern Europe.”<sup>258</sup> Could the able Soviet diplomat exploit Nkrumah’s mental instability and paranoia to make him do irrational, emotional things? Assuaging this anxiety circulating in London and Washington became one of the main occupations in Western circles dealing with political Ghana.

In June 1963, Sir Jackson wrote a letter to Kennedy, stressing that Nkrumah was not “actively anti-West,” only a nuisance at the rhetorical level, and suggested that the West should learn to live with his left-wing bark, while keeping in mind that it was much louder than its actual, pro-Western bite.<sup>259</sup> In fact, in the first half of the year there was evidence supporting this theory, because of the importance the Ghanaian president attached to investment from the West, while the new development plan was being launched. In February, Nkrumah took part in a dinner with the foreign business community, in the course of which he reaffirmed that “Ghana’s socialism is not incompatible with the existence and growth of a vigorous private sector in the economy,” provided that foreign investors abide to the rules for general development laid down by the government.<sup>260</sup>

While ever keeping alive the suspicion about capitalists motives and intentions, Nkrumah seemed at times to be earnestly willing to build up a mixed economy, in

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<sup>256</sup> Kennedy himself asked Edgar Kaiser once: “What is this guy — some kind of nut?” As reported in Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 93.

<sup>257</sup> TNA, CAB 21/6007, “Communist Subversion in Africa,” 23.04.1964.

<sup>258</sup> Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 295.

<sup>259</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 93-94.

<sup>260</sup> “We [...] welcome every honest investor who wants to work for his equitable profit, but we shall not tolerate anyone who seeks to direct what political course we should follow. Any Government, or, for that matter, any organisation which invests in, or gives a loan or assistance to, another country like our own must on no account interfere directly or indirectly in the internal or external affairs of that country. If any attempt is made on the strength of such credit, loan, aid or assistance to interfere in the political, social, economic, cultural and military affairs of our country, then we shall consider that the motives under lying such activities and operations have a neo-colonialist character.” Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, p. 141. The High Commission greeted the dinner, considering it “a smack in the eye for the communists.” TNA, FO 371/167175, Cole to Chadwick, 25.09.1963.

which state socialism and private foreign investment could coexist and contribute, each in its own sphere, to the development of the country. To provide for a more certain and stable environment for foreign capital, the government promoted the Capital Investments Act. In August, Nkrumah inaugurated the new United Africa Company (Unilever) soap factory, which seemed to epitomize the fruitful cooperation between capitalist enterprise and African socialism. In his speech, the Osagyefo presented this event as symbol of how the old capitalism, part of the colonial exploitative machinery, might be turned to the profit of the former colonized peoples:

The Unilever Group have a long history of association with Africa. They began their operations in our part of the world — and again let me be frank — because they wished for a cheap source of raw material for soap, which they manufactured in Europe and sold back to, among others, those very countries from which they had so cheaply exported the raw material, at a price which showed a handsome margin of profit. [...]

Subconsciously, therefore, the United Africa Company became itself a part of that colonial system which condemned Africa to be an exporter of cheap priced cash crops and mineral ores and the importer of expensive goods. [...]

It is a credit to the United Africa Company that it was able to read the writing on the wall. [...] As independence approached, the Lever Brothers Group of Companies came to realise that profit was more likely, and investment safer, if they abandoned the old colonial ideas of trade and devoted their capital to productive industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, if I comment on this change today, it is because soap is so symbolic. It was with soap that all began. Now the wheel has turned the full circle and Lever Brothers, who originally came to Ghana for the raw material, are today manufacturing here the finished product.<sup>261</sup>

After the temporary upswing in Ghana's credibility which the Addis Ababa conference of 1963 and the establishment of the OAU had brought, as of the late the summer observers noticed the development of a second shift to the left after the first one of 1961. The reasons for this swing are most probably to be found in the necessity for Nkrumah to consolidate the ties between Ghana and the Eastern bloc, in order to overcome the difficulties which had so far prevented satisfactory economic relations to develop between the two. Nkrumah was counting on the cooperation with the socialist countries at the technical, scientific and economic level to build up the state sector of Ghana's economy; moreover, he hoped to diminish Ghana's dependency on the fluctuations of the cocoa international price through the

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 218-219.

implementation of barter deals with the planned economies of the East. However, Ghana did not possess the administrative and technical capacities needed to organize and carry out highly complex state-to-state trade deals, while the socialist countries, with little experience in the export of their products in non-bloc countries, seldom possessed goods saleable on the Ghanaian market.<sup>262</sup>

At the end of August Nkrumah organized for the first time a meeting between him and all the ambassadors of the ten Eastern bloc countries with which Ghana now entertained diplomatic relations, to discuss the issue of economic cooperation.<sup>263</sup> The delegation heads confirmed that here lay the main difficulty in the relations between their countries and Ghana, which they in general considered as cordial. They remarked in particular that only small fraction of the credits granted by the socialist countries (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria) was being actually utilized, and complained about bureaucracy and the import licensing system which were holding up development projects and trade.<sup>264</sup> They proposed that Ghana should import more goods from the socialist countries, sell them locally and use the revenue to finance the required local civil engineering works; the Czech ambassador even came up with the pragmatic proposition that Ghana turn to a French financing house to overcome certain liquidity problems.<sup>265</sup>

The British, who received a copy of the meeting minutes right away from one their contacts at the ministry of foreign affairs, were on the one hand disturbed by the communist jargon used by Nkrumah, and by his presenting Ghana as a socialist country; on the other hand, they realized that Nkrumah often tended to adjust the language to the audience, and that there were concrete economic grounds for him to summon the meeting.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 274-279.

<sup>263</sup> Albania, Bulgaria, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Soviet Union, Yugoslavia. The representative of the East German trade delegation was not invited, most likely to avoid incensing the West Germans (see chapter III).

<sup>264</sup> TNA, FO 371/167157, Note, 12.09.1963.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> TNA, FO 371/167157, Cole to Chadwick, 25.09.1963.



## The Swing of the Pendulum

In the autumn of 1963 Whitehall kept receiving alarming reports, according to which Nkrumah had was on the point of going communist, or had already done so. Colin Legum for instance – South African exile, distinguished scholar, and correspondent from Africa for the *Sunday Observer* –told the High Commission on returning from Ghana that while he had always believed that Nkrumah used communist slogans pragmatically as a means to further the development of the state, he now considered him instead a committed Marxist-Leninist, whose final aim was to establish a communist state in Ghana. He deplored the lack of Westerners in the surroundings of Nkrumah who could make him clear that there existed more types of socialism than that in force in Eastern Europe.<sup>267</sup>

This kind of reports, as coming from Western correspondents, were relatively common in those days. It was not so commonplace though for the head of the special police force to tell a foreign diplomat that his own head of state was a communist. In a private conversation in September, Harley, chief of the Ghana Special Branch, the internal security service, told De Freitas that he had also come to the conclusion that Nkrumah was trying to build a communist state. The director of the Ghana Information Services told the High Commissioner the same thing, adding that he thought Ghana's only hope to lie in the president's removal.<sup>268</sup>

It is clear that as of 1962-1963 ever widening circles inside the civil service, judiciary, police, and armed forces, began considering a forceful overthrow of Nkrumah and his regime, or at least to look forward to the possibility. The problem was that, while the CPP, associated with lack of personal liberties and economic difficulties, were increasingly unpopular among the masses, Nkrumah himself was still considered the founder of the nation, and surrounded by an aura of sanctity and grandeur that made it difficult to think about a coup while he was in the country. The British and the CIA registered the growing dissatisfaction in the country with a

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<sup>267</sup> TNA, DO 195/11, Note of a conversation on 14.11.1962.

<sup>268</sup> TNA, DO 153/59, De Freitas to Chadwick, 27.09.1963.

mixture of contentment and uneasiness, and prepared the ground for the relations with post-Nkrumah Ghana.

The president himself was of course aware of these manoeuvres, and gave vent to his frustrations in public speeches. In November, addressing the Second Conference of African Journalists that was about to inaugurate the Pan-African Union of Journalists, he warned that all committed African revolutionaries were called upon to “repelling a host of enemies” who besieged African freedom:

Enemies whom we call imperialists, colonialists and neo-colonialists, in an attempt to categorise their activities, but enemies whose ends are always the same: the undermining and restriction of our independence. They work laboriously to impede and frustrate our economic development; they employ all manner of means to prevent our unity as a continent. To destroy our political stability is the obvious method of attacking our independence.

Hence they try to corrupt our political institutions, our civil service, our police, our army. Even our universities and judiciary are not exempt from their attempts to capture our constitution for their own ends through bribery and corruption. But thanks to the firm resistance at all levels of our national movements, they are often foiled.<sup>269</sup>

The CRO described the speech as “the most violent and swingeing attack on ‘Colonialism and Imperialism’ that has yet been heard in Ghana.”<sup>270</sup> At the end of 1963, as the British High Commissioner was leaving his post, the most frequently asked question about Ghana in Whitehall was: “Whither Nkrumah?” De Freitas, who as it seems experienced Nkrumah’s second swing to the left as a personal failure, admitted now that one could not rule out anymore the possibility that the latter was leading Ghana to communism.<sup>271</sup> There was consensus on this inside the High Commission. The acting Commissioner, who took over temporarily, painted a really sombre picture of Nkrumah’s personal and political profile:

It would have little plausibility if one regarded Nkrumah as, for example, Barbara Ward [Lady Jackson, NB] (still one of his “fans”) does, as a nice good-intentioned man, a bit muddled, with some rather silly ideological ideas and susceptible to bad advice. Muddled he may be and susceptible to bad advice: but I am convinced — even without the advantage of personal acquaintance, but with the support of the American Ambassador who knows him intimately, that he is neither nice nor good-intentioned. The evidence against him on this score, even publicly, seems to me to be devastating. *He is a “bad” man with some very dishonest and dangerous*

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<sup>269</sup> Obeng, Selected Speeches, p. 293.

<sup>270</sup> TNA, DO 153/59, CRO to Secretary of State, 19.12.1963.

<sup>271</sup> TNA, DO 153/59, Cole to Chadwick, 11.12.1963.

*intentions* [italics added]. [...] To put it briefly, Nkrumah seems to me just the sort of man who could play the Communist game very readily. Indeed he seems a splendid potential example of what I have seen described [...] as a Soviet “agent of influence”.<sup>272</sup>

The CRO, in their assessment of Ghana at the end of 1963, highlighted some particularly worrisome elements in Nkrumah’s turning to the East, namely the reorganization of the Security Service, now combining the former External Intelligence Service and the Special Branch, whose officers would receive training in the Soviet Union; and the recurring plans for the creation of a “Russian Division,” “armed by Russia and controlled by Russians in civilian clothes.”<sup>273</sup> They explained these developments with the influence of the Soviet ambassador, who had succeeded in convincing Nkrumah that only relying on Soviet advice he would improve his personal security situation, as well as with Nkrumah’s frustration for his failures on the pan-African side, which led him to seek an easy scapegoat in neocolonialism and imperialism.

Ghana still hoped to receive contributions for its development by Her Majesty’s Government, as the five million pounds granted for the Volta River Project had not been spent.<sup>274</sup> The “Ghanaian Experiment” though had lost any usefulness it could possibly have for Britain’s decolonization plans; it was developing not only into a nuisance for its policy towards Africa, but also to an embarrassment for the relations with Washington. Had the time come to pull the plug?

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> TNA, DO 153/59, CRO to Secretary of State, 19.12.1963.

<sup>274</sup> “If the President and his regime survive into the middle of next year, the British Government is itself likely to be faced with the delicate question whether and, if so, how much to contribute to the ambitious Ghanaian Seven Year Plan.” Ibid.

## 1.5 Lord Home, Harold Wilson, and Denouement

According to Thompson, De Freitas' replacement in January 1964 with a "relatively junior officer" shows how low Ghana had by then fallen on Whitehall's priority list.<sup>275</sup> While Harold Smedley turned out to be, as Thompson admits, one of the best diplomats in Accra in that period, it is true though that after years of intense debates there was some "Ghana fatigue" in Britain, and the approach of Her Majesty's diplomats became more defensive. The new High Commissioner's main preoccupation was how to preserve intact those areas where Britain's influence could still be felt. Maintaining Ghana's West-orientation, and defending the over £100-million of British investments in Ghana, remained the two main tasks.

After the second attempt on Nkrumah's life perpetrated by one of his police on protection duties inside Flagstaff House, keeping in touch with the president directly became ever difficult. Nkrumah shut himself up into Osu Castle, and received no one but the Soviet ambassador and the Chinese Prime Minister Chou-En Lai, on official visit, until February.<sup>276</sup> Luckily for the British, in the aftermath of the assassination attempt there was a reorganization of the police forces, and Harrley, the former head of the Special Branch — as we have seen a confidant of the British High Commission — was made Police Commissioner.<sup>277</sup> The president's personal safety however was put in charge to the newly-established Presidential Guard Regiment, trained by Soviet advisers, and armed with Soviet guns and ammunition.<sup>278</sup>

The leverage Britain traditionally held on Ghana's armed forces remained strong, yet as they had been trained in the best British tradition, the military were still wary of meddling with politics. While they resisted the CPP's attempt to indoctrinate cadets with propaganda, they seemed to remain aloof from coup d'état plans for the time being, although, as one British officer remarked, "in the environment of Ghana,

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<sup>275</sup> Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 390.

<sup>276</sup> For the communiqué of the visit, see PRAAD, ADM 16/50.

<sup>277</sup> TNA, DO 195/209, Accra to CRO, 09.01.1964.

<sup>278</sup> TNA, DO 195/209, Col. Mermagen to Maj. Gen. Price, 18.01.1964.

if any trouble were brewing in the Army, *it would be kept very quiet indeed.*”<sup>279</sup> The West remained tuned in for possible signs of a coup d’état.

In February, after the confirmation plebiscite for the constitutional reform which made Ghana officially a one-party state, Nkrumah became accessible again to visitors. He gave the agreement to Britain’s new High Commissioner, who in his report described the president as shaken in his “nervous vitality” and less charming than he had expected.<sup>280</sup> The Osagyefo also welcomed representatives of the British business community, whom he tried to reassure about Ghana’s openness vis-à-vis foreign private investment.<sup>281</sup> This was hard to believe though, considering the anti-Western and anti-capitalist propaganda poured out by Ghana’s press.<sup>282</sup>

The deteriorating relations between Ghana and the United States after the death of Kennedy were what worried the British in special way. A rupture between Accra and Washington, as the Volta River Project entered now its second stage, might have triggered a final, definitive eastward lurch, in the course of which Britain’s interests would have been severely impaired. Prime Minister Alec Douglas-Home (Lord Home), who had taken over in Downing Street after Macmillan’s resigning, and the US Secretary of State Dean Rusk, had agreed therefore in December that the Volta River scheme should not be terminated for political reasons.<sup>283</sup> As the CPP organized demonstrations in front of the US-embassy against alleged “rumour-mongering,” the risk that public opinion turned definitely against Ghana in the United States however remained.

In the following months the Americans and the British developed a common strategy for Ghana, which basically rested on keeping pressure on Nkrumah by the means of high-level visits. Britain struggled though to live up to the expectations the

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> TNA, DO 195/209, Smedley to Sandys, 14.02.1964.

<sup>281</sup> “You must not believe your own press,” Nkrumah told to the two representatives of the West Africa Committee, who wondered “whether private investment was wanted at all in Ghana.” TNA, DO 195/209, Accra to CRO, 05.02.1964.

<sup>282</sup> Take, for instance, the editorial of *The Ghanaian Times*, “British Neo-Colonialism in Africa” (19.03.1964), which lambasted Britain’s “neo-Colonialist strategy to perpetuate British sphere of influence on the continent and to hamper the growth of African unity”.

<sup>283</sup> TNA, PREM 11/4583, Record of a Conversation, 18.12.1963.

NATO allies put on the influence by the former colonial power — both Lord Boyd-Carpenter and Duncan Sandys declined the invitation to go pay a visit to the Osagyefo in Accra.<sup>284</sup> Only Lord Mountbatten, Britain's Chief of Defence Staff, accepted to visit Accra in the course of a tour of West Africa in October, which reinforced the traditional good relations between Ghana's military and the United Kingdom, but contributed little in terms of direct influence on Nkrumah and on Ghana's political orientation.<sup>285</sup>

### **Moderation Again?**

In 1964 Britain's political influence in Ghana was on the wane, and it seems that they increasingly accepted this as a fact of life. The main reason was without a doubt Britain's financial weakness, but also the decreasing interest that Ghana managed to arouse in London, as it tried to come to terms with other pressing issues linked to decolonization such as East Africa, Aden, and the Middle East.<sup>286</sup> This reverberated on the issue of capital aid for Ghana, where relatively small sums might have 'bought' though some fair amount of goodwill on the part of the Ghanaians. Yet even those financing that had been already granted for contribution to Ghana's development could not be brought to use for the purpose.

Since 1962, it had become clear that the £5 million Britain had allocated for the purchase of UK goods and services in the context of the Volta scheme would not be entirely spent by Ghana; Nkrumah therefore personally asked that the remaining balance be freed for spending for other development purposes.<sup>287</sup> However, despite repeated request filed again in 1965, as well as appeals on the part of the British business community in Ghana which expected to get some of the contracts, the two governments never managed to agree on a financeable project, and the £3,5 million

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<sup>284</sup> TNA, DO 195/238, Chadwick to Killick, 29.05.1964.

<sup>285</sup> TNA, DO 195/238, Accra to Bottomley, 21.10.1964.

<sup>286</sup> White, Decolonisation, p. 75.

<sup>287</sup> TNA, OD 30/72, 08.02.1962.

already put aside for Ghana remained in the drawer, because of political and bureaucratic difficulties.<sup>288</sup>

In April 1964, after the constitutional reform and reshuffles at various levels, from the judiciary to the military and the press, Nkrumah considered that his power had consolidated again to a satisfying point, and felt confident enough to envisage his leaving the country to take part in the Commonwealth prime ministers' meeting in July in London, and in the Non-Aligned Conference in Cairo in October. This political relaxation, and the need for Western investment for the implementation of the Seven-Year Development Plan, led to a phase of relative moderation in Ghana's attitude, watched though with suspicion by the British High Commission.<sup>289</sup> In a speech given to the diplomatic corps in May, Nkrumah took the chance for some sideswipes, but managed to give nevertheless an impression of confidence:

Mr. Dean, the dynamic impact of Africa's awakening has shaken the world. It was Ghana that first stirred that slumbering African giant. Because of this, neither Ghana nor Kwame Nkrumah has been forgiven by those whose economic and political interests are incompatible with what we stand for. We have been attacked relentlessly and mercilessly by the Western press, often by journalists who have assessed the position after a few hours in Ghana spent leaning at the bar of the Ambassador Hotel. [...] I am tolerated by the Western press "as affectionately as toothache and as tenderly as a thorn."

But it is not I or Ghana who is worried about all this. We in Ghana don't care a rap what they say about us. We know where are going, what we want and how we are going to get there. We will not be deterred by any criticism. As Omar Khaayam wrote: "The dogs bark, but the caravan moves on."<sup>290</sup>

Though in Whitehall they were used by now to Nkrumah's tactical turnabouts, Britain's diplomats, and the press too, were taken by surprise by the unexpectedly constructive behaviour the Ghanaian leader demonstrated at the prime minister's meeting in July. Instead of the left-wing populist, he played the elder, responsible statesman, showing that he still valued the Commonwealth as a useful stage for his wider foreign policy.

In the months before the meeting, there had been much talk in Britain about Ghana's presence in the Commonwealth, which some press commentators said was

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<sup>288</sup> TNA, OD 30/72, Chadwick to King, 30.07.1965.

<sup>289</sup> TNA, DO 195/210, Smedley to Sandys, 16.09.1964.

<sup>290</sup> Obeng, Selected Speeches, p. 374.

becoming inappropriate because of the dictatorship and the internal repression, as much as the presence of South Africa had previously become a political embarrassment (and was therefore pushed to the door).<sup>291</sup> After the July meeting, this kind of talk was silenced, at least for some time. It was in particular Nkrumah's proposal that a Commonwealth secretariat be established as a coordination organ that brought him the most plaudits — its approval was one of Nkrumah's last true successes on the international stage.

As the *Ghanaian Times* remarked: "With this singular proposal Osagyefo did more than anyone could conceive to strengthen the Commonwealth [...] [so that] it would play a better role in promoting racial harmony and become a symbol of co-existence between diversities of peoples and thoughts. Osagyefo thus emerges with the full regalia of statesmanship without abandoning his militancy or his principles."<sup>292</sup> By skilfully playing the Commonwealth card, as well as through the presence at the United Nations, Nkrumah managed for some time to overcome his growing isolation among Africa's statesmen, which hindered him from acting as Africa's spokesman as he had done in the 1950s.<sup>293</sup>

## **The Tightening Noose**

The gulf between British and Ghanaian foreign policy objectives had widened again to a significant extent by late 1964. In November, Nkrumah sent Foreign Minister Botsio over to London to meet the new Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Botsio carried a letter from the Osagyefo to Wilson, as well as a memorandum on Ghana's foreign policy.<sup>294</sup> In these documents, Nkrumah affirmed once again that Ghana's main foreign policy goals were the establishment of a continental unity government for Africa, and the liberation of the continent from colonialism, which at that time basically meant Portuguese colonialism. He tried to win over Britain's

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<sup>291</sup> TNA, DO 195/264, Smedley to Chadwick, 18.04.1964; Chadwick to Smedley, 08.05.1964.

<sup>292</sup> As quoted in TNA, DO 195/223, Smedley to Chadwick, 17.07.1964.

<sup>293</sup> Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 390-391.

<sup>294</sup> TNA, FO 371/176525.



support, arguing that only a unified Africa could provide a stable enough market for British products. He also wanted to secure London's help to influence the United States, which after the election of Lyndon Johnson to the White House was getting active again in the Congo.<sup>295</sup>

The plea did not bear any particular results. By that time, the British considered Ghanaian pan-African activism as "Nkrumah's pipe dream," an unrealistic utopia meant to conceal Ghana's ambitions of influencing politics all over Africa.<sup>296</sup> Wilson received Nkrumah's letter but did not read it in Botsio's presence, as is common in these situations. On the Congo issue, he said he had agreed to the use of Ascension Island for the Belgian-American hostage rescue operation, as otherwise "a tremendous outcry" would result in Britain; he was non-committal on the issue of Portuguese colonial policy. The prime minister expressed though the hope that other Commonwealth countries (such as Ghana) would not make the problem of Rhodesia more difficult for Britain at the United Nations, but Botsio said that avoiding the subject in New York was impossible.<sup>297</sup>

In fact, from the second half of 1964 on, London gave up any hope of being able to change Ghana's attitude in a more Western-friendly, conservative direction, and worked, in concert with the United States, for the objective of a regime change in Accra. The best chance in this sense, apart from the influence on Ghana's armed forces, was given by Ghana's balance of payment difficulties, mainly caused by the tumbling cocoa price, which had forced Accra to demand international financial assistance to avoid a default on external obligations. The British-American line on this matter had been clearly set by a letter drafted by Harold Smedley at the end of November:

*It is not, as I see it, in our interests that the Nkrumah regime should continue in power here [italics added]. I believe, as you will know from other correspondence, that any likely successor regime at this juncture would be an improvement from our point of view. In brief the present regime is ideologically opposed to us; its internal actions cause us embarrassment in the Commonwealth relationship; and in the economic field its actions run counter British interests,*

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<sup>295</sup> TNA, DO 195/265, Nkrumah to Wilson, 19.11.1964.

<sup>296</sup> TNA, DO 195/265, Ghana's Foreign Policy - Mr. Botsio's Visit, n.d.

<sup>297</sup> TNA, DO 195/265, Record of a conversation, 23.11.1964.

and are inefficient in the bargain. It follows that we should do nothing which will help to keep it in power except where our clear national interest dictates otherwise.<sup>298</sup>

Smedley was particularly worried about possible nationalizations of foreign assets in the course of a final lurch to the left, which could endanger the £100 million worth of British investment in Ghana:

In any case our investments are also hostages. There is [...] the risk of provoking a take over, and to hell with the consequences, cf. Indonesia. Algeria and Tunisia nearer home seem to suggest that such action directed against the dominant economic power may not necessarily even deter other investors, and both Algeria and the U.A.R. seem [...] to have introduced measures very similar to the threatened State Corporations Bill. I do not think a take over an immediate risk. At the moment I judge the Ghanaians still hope to squeeze money out of the Banks, the merchant houses and perhaps once again the mines [...]<sup>299</sup>

In the following months Britain and the United States developed a common strategy, meant to isolate Ghana at the international level, and bring the ordinary people in Ghana to feel economic hardships, so that they would then put the blame on the government (“this is already happening and will proceed”).<sup>300</sup> The main pillar of this strategy was to refer Ghana’s requests for financial aid to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and to the World Bank, which they knew would play the part of the bad cop, requesting austerity and liberal policies in exchange for their support, thus de facto undermining the CPP’s socialist development programme.

The Ghanaians themselves, by the sheer amount of their financial requests to the developed countries, made it easy for the latter to declare their impossibility to help at the bilateral level and to refer the matter to the IMF. Between the second half of 1964 and the first months of 1965, Ghana approached among others the governments of Canada, the United States, West Germany, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, Japan, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland, requesting loans for development purposes and various forms of financial assistance which amounted, according to the calculations of the High Commission in Accra, to about £1.3 billion.<sup>301</sup> Knowing Britain’s bad balance of payments situation, and perhaps out of pride, they first hesitated to present

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<sup>298</sup> TNA, DO 153/19, Smedley to Chadwick, 30.10.1964.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> TNA, DO 153/17, Smedley to Bottomley, 02.11.1965.

formal requests of financial aid to London; then, in 1965, they resolved to demand various forms of credits and loans, for about £180 million, which of course only prompted a preoccupied reply by Wilson, who recommended the intervention of the IMF.<sup>302</sup>

In May a mission of three IMF experts visited Accra; as expected, they proposed a phase of strict “consolidation,” during which the government’s overall expenses would have to be cut, including the price paid to cocoa farmers, imports curtailed, and new credit-based development projects put to a halt. In Smedley’s words, “the Mission put its finger on the main follies and weaknesses of Ghana’s economic policy.”<sup>303</sup> The Ghana government paid lip service to the recommendations of the experts from Washington, and appointed some Western-friendly figure in visible positions, but failed to radically redress its economic policy as the IMF pretended; one of the reasons was that in October Accra would host the summit of the OAU, and a series of prestige-related expenses had to be met, financed mainly through agreements with Western import-export companies.<sup>304</sup>

As *The Times* summarized the situation in July, Ghana was “consistently flouting” the IMF’s recommendations: “If the Government does not soon begin to trim its sails a clash with the I.M.F. is inevitable. Equally, however, the Ghana Government must face a rupture of most of its trading links and will be forced back into the arms of the Soviet block [sic], whose bilateral trade pacts have proved very unsatisfactory.”<sup>305</sup> In the meantime, economic hardships began to hit the wider populace, as the government struggled to consolidate the balance of payments situation by curtailing imports. Due to the widespread corruption and inefficiency in the import licensing system, essential goods such as drugs and fertilizers were blocked, while luxury goods for those with political connections kept being imported.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> S. TNA, DO 221/8. Also the build-up of Ghana’s military equipment continued unabated: a frigate was ordered from Britain for the navy as well as Italian Macchi jet aircraft for the air force, a new airfield was being built in Tamale. TNA, DO 195/10, Report, Counter-Subversion Committee (n.d.).

<sup>305</sup> *The Times*, “Collision Course In Ghana,” 09.07.1965, as quoted in TNA, DO 153/17.

<sup>306</sup> TNA, DO 195/210; cf. Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p.239.

Where did the United Kingdom stand in this situation? In general, the High Commissioner reckoned that British policy “should be to [...] minimise the harm that the Ghana Government seek to do to our interests and to hang on in the hope of a change for the better.” Having lost any political value for Britain and its decolonization policy, those interests were now primarily expressed in economic terms:

We look to Ghana as a market for British goods and services. For its size, Ghana is and is likely to remain an appreciable market for British goods. Whatever the mismanagement of her affairs she has reasonably assured foreign exchange earnings of around £115 million [...]. We also look to her as the home of past British investment from which we hope to retain some return. The current value of our investments here may be of the order of £100 million or more [...].

Our immediate concern must be to secure payment for the goods and services which we have provided Ghana in the past and which we have undertaken to supply in the future.<sup>307</sup>

### **Wilson, Rhodesia, and the Regime Change**

The United Kingdom faced a dilemma in this situation: on the one hand, there was the strict contrariety to any form of financial bailout for Ghana, in the hope that economic hardships felt by the general population would accelerate the downfall of the CPP regime. On the other, Britain was the foreign country with the largest stake in Ghana’s economy, and every economic shock affecting the country at large had to be felt by the British expatriate business community too. Moreover, there was the omnipresent risk that if cornered, Nkrumah might opt for some further left-wing radicalization, in the course of which British investments would surely suffer.

The British were therefore not as free to keep a tough line as the Americans, whose investment on the Volta River Project was fairly insulated from political risks by contractual provisions. That is why, at least at the level of the financial negotiations, they kept a moderately hard line — in the word of a CRO official, trying to “steer an objective course between policies that are either too soft or too hard and to settle on those which would effectively further the interests of the West in Ghana.”<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> TNA, DO 153/17, Smedley to Bottomley, 02.11.1965

<sup>308</sup> TNA, DO 153/21, Hennings to Owen, 19.11.1965.

Britain's role was more significant at the level of covert and intelligence operations. We know that until 1962 the MI6 collaborated actively with the Ghanaian Special Branch.<sup>309</sup> However after the Kulungugu attempt against Nkrumah the links between Ghanaian and British information services at the official level were cut, although they continued informally.<sup>310</sup> As the former were reorganized in different sub-agencies, it is known that the Ghanaians relied thereafter on the advice of foreign experts from various countries, also from the Eastern bloc; it is hard though to exactly assess the activities of the MI6 in Ghana after 1962, due to the lack of archival disclosures.<sup>311</sup>

In any event, in London they were well informed not only about Ghana's internal political developments, but also on what became known, in circles adverse to the CPP, as "Ghanaian subversion in Africa," i.e. Accra's sponsorship for anti-colonial liberation movements, mainly in the Portuguese territories, as well as for a large number of more-or-less progressive and left-wing oppositional groups in countries such as the Congos, Nigeria, and Ghana's neighbouring states.<sup>312</sup> In 1964, the British Joint Intelligence Committee dealt specifically with the matter, and produced report (63/16 of 3 February), which concluded that "the Ghanaian subversion in Africa was against British interests; that it was on a large scale backed by large funds, and that its objectives coincided closely with and were complementary to Communist aims."<sup>313</sup>

Given that by that time Britain's and Ghana's foreign and economic policy aims were increasingly at odds, Prime Minister Douglas-Home ("always slightly irked

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<sup>309</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/155.

<sup>310</sup> Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 271. The Ghanaian Security Service was divided in particular into: (1) the Special Intelligence Unit, employed for internal intelligence; (2) the Special Branch; and (3) the Military Intelligence. Tasks and assignments were often overlapped though, which led to tension between the various organs and agencies, *Armah, Peace without Power*, p. 16-17.

<sup>311</sup> For the activities of agents from communist countries during the Nkrumah regime, see the National Liberation Council's booklet "Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa," PRAAD, ADM 16/65.

<sup>312</sup> This reflected the various types of personalities which had been invited to the All-African People's Conference in 1959, in Kwesi Armah's words: "(1) African nationalists in non-independent countries; (2) Leaders of the so-called revolutionary African states and (3) Leftist African nationalists opposition movements in independent states, which states were considered by these opposition movements as clients or 'puppets' of the West." *Peace without Power*, p. 58-59. Among the most influential foreign activists in Ghana were "Samuel G. Ikoku from Nigeria, T.R. Makonnen from Ethiopia, Harry Basner from South Africa, Habib Ntiang from Senegal, Djibo Bakari from Niger," and even a tribal leader, the s.c. "King of Sanwi," a small territory part of the Côte d'Ivoire, *ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>313</sup> TNA, FO 11/4823, Counter Subversion Committee, Working Group on Ghana, Record of a Meeting, 23.03.1964.

when useful intelligence is reported to him and he is then told that no use can be made of it”) came up with an interesting suggestion for the concerned departments: “Can we not leak some detailed facts about Nkrumah’s actions through channels which could not be brought home to us?”<sup>314</sup> To be sure this was possible and was done, although the experts had to admit that much of the information contained in the report already circulated in Africa.

The Working Group on Ghana of the Counter Subversion Committee, on which sat representatives of the Foreign Office, the CRO and the Security Service, decided that the latter two would decide “on a country-by-country basis how much intelligence [...] could be passed on a confidential attributable basis to Commonwealth Governments,” while the former would take care of the non-Commonwealth African countries.<sup>315</sup> The Information Research Department (IRD), the Foreign Office’s covert anti-communist propaganda department, was entrusted instead, in collaboration with the CRO, with the task to leak intelligence about “Ghanaian subversion” through “wholly inattributable media.”<sup>316</sup>

As far as can be judged looking at the scattered materials that have survived in the archives, the IRD was active in Ghana, whether directly or indirectly, at least since 1962.<sup>317</sup> Initially, the work concentrated strictly on the leaking of editorial material (magazines, newspapers, bulletins, literature and so on) that could be employed to uphold the morale of the “friends of the West” in Ghana, and “to give them fresh arguments with which to influence other Ghanaians.”<sup>318</sup> Through their channels at the level of the Special Branch, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the catholic hierarchy, the British clandestinely spread anti-communist publications such as *Interpreter*, *Asian Analyst* (“we should welcome an *African Analyst*”) and *Trends of Communist Propaganda*. Later on though, as Nkrumah carried on with his plan to

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<sup>314</sup> TNA, FO 11/4823, Wright to McIndoe, 05.03.1964.

<sup>315</sup> TNA, FO 11/4823, Counter Subversion Committee, Working Group on Ghana, Record of a Meeting, 23.03.1964.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> For the history of the IRD in the first phase of the Cold War, see Defty, Andrew. *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda 1945-53: The Information Research Department*. London: Routledge, 2004; s.a. Lashmar, Paul, and James Oliver. *Britain's Secret Propaganda War*. Stroud: Sutton Pub Limited, 1998.

<sup>318</sup> TNA, FO 1110/1571, Hornyold to Bozman, 12.11.1962.

train a class of motivated socialist cadres at the Ideological Institute in Winneba, the IRD were confronted not only with Marxist propaganda coming from outside, such as from the Soviet and Chinese embassies, but also with a stream of home-made Marxist-type propaganda, produced in Ghana with the help of experts from the Eastern bloc and of Western communists.<sup>319</sup>

In 1964 the CPP pursued the formal step towards a one-party regime. Since Ghana's pan-African activities were considered now as complementary to those of the communists, London expressed increased interest for the possibilities of covert infiltration of anti-communist material in Ghana. However, the High Commission's officials in Accra were reluctant to use their contacts in the ministries and in the civil service to spread this material, out of fear to put these contacts in danger.<sup>320</sup>

In any case, while the effort to influence public opinion in Ghana through anti-communist publications encountered increasing difficulties due to the tightening censorship and police-state repressive measures, by spreading information abroad on Ghana's clandestine operations the British definitely contributed to the isolation of Nkrumah and his regime among the other African states.

Tension between Ghana and the countries affected by Ghana's support for oppositional groups peaked during the lead-up of the 1965 OAU summit in Accra. The Francophone states of the *Organisation Commune d'Afrique et Malgache* (OCAM) led by the Côte d'Ivoire, but supported by Commonwealth countries like Nigeria too, threatened to boycott the meeting if the guerrilla fighters, which Ghana insisted were "political refugees," were not expelled.<sup>321</sup> Nkrumah 'resolved' the situation by sending the fighters away for the time of the summit, handing them out return flight tickets.<sup>322</sup>

The OAU meeting brought though not only positive news for Britain. The Rhodesian crisis reached its climax, with the spectre of an imminent Unilateral

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<sup>319</sup> "We would like to get the Ghanaians, and particularly the Special Branch, perturbed about the Institute too." Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> TNA, FO 1110/1828, Hornyold to Duke, 10.03.1964.

<sup>321</sup> Ghana's net of agents extended over nine different African countries. In April 1965, guerrillas trained in Ghana by Chinese instructors attempted to kill the president of Niger, Hamani Diori, which provoked sharp criticism against Ghana among the OCAM states. Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 233-236.

<sup>322</sup> Armah, *Peace without Power*, p. 17.

Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Rhodesia's racist leader Ian Smith waved in front of the African states as a red cloth. The issue of racially-segregated Southern Rhodesia (today's Zimbabwe) — self-governing British colony since 1923 — had been adding tension to the already strained Ghanaian-British relations for years. Ghana and the other African countries suspected that London was prepared to grant Rhodesia full independence without eliminating the privileges of the white minority.<sup>323</sup> The matter was raised already in 1963 at the Security Council of the United Nations, forcing Britain to one of its rare employments of the veto right.<sup>324</sup>

The issue was pivotal for London's image in the world: were the British about to grant independence to yet another colony ruled by a white minority, like they had done in the case of South Africa? As the High Commissioner in Accra knew as well, without any significant progress in this matter the slight progress made in the summer in Ghana's attitude versus the West would be lost, and the state of British-Ghanaian relations would "get back to square one."<sup>325</sup> Time passed by, and it became clear to everyone that while in London the position of the white settlers, who refused to envisage a multiracial society without colour bars, was condemned, this was not one of those issues on which either the British or the West were willing to resort to strong-hand tactics — no white troops would risk their lives to bring democracy and freedom to an oppressed black majority. So while Britain's double standards were flatly revealed, the Ghanaian press felt free to pull out all rhetorical stops in condemning Whitehall's hypocrisy.<sup>326</sup>

When in 1965 Ghana hosted the OAU summit, there was nothing thus that could refrain it from fomenting radical condemnation for Britain's attitude on Southern Rhodesia, and to call for the use of force to quell the rebellion; not even the talk Nkrumah had with Harold Wilson at Accra airport, where the latter was passing

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<sup>323</sup> Kwesi Armah in particular, Ghana's High Commissioner in London, accused the British Government of preparing a unilateral move in this sense. TNA, PREM 11/4821, 24.02.1964.

<sup>324</sup> Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 391.

<sup>325</sup> TNA, DO 195/223, 07.08.1964.

<sup>326</sup> TNA, DO 195/211, Annual Information Review, Accra, 1965.



through on his way back from negotiations in Salisbury, brought some understanding on the matter.<sup>327</sup>

The issue of Rhodesia allowed it for Ghana to conceal its failure to rally the rest of independent African behind the dream which Nkrumah cherished so much, the project of a continental union government. By advocating a military solution to the crisis, Ghana could present itself again as the leader of the radical wing, the fearless and selfless apostle of the total liberation of Africa. Yet the other African states chose though not to follow Ghana on the dangerous path of armed intervention against the mighty armed forces of white Rhodesia, knowing, as the president of Malawi stressed at the OAU summit, that “within a week [...] the Rhodesian army could conquer the whole of East and Central Africa and the armies and air forces of Ghana and Nigeria could do nothing to prevent it.”<sup>328</sup>

Thus, although it had established the African Liberation Committee to support the anti-colonial nationalist movements, the OAU decided not to support Nkrumah’s idea of an African, UN-backed invasion against Rhodesia, and to go instead the same way the British had chosen — sanctions. All member states were invited by the OAU to break off relations with Britain, the colonial power legally responsible for what happened in Rhodesia, to protest against London’s failure to prevent the UDI. This forced for the first time Nkrumah to choose between the bond with Britain and the Commonwealth, and Africa. As Smedley put it: “The Ghanaians clearly got caught on the hop. They wanted to use the [OAU] meeting to advance the President’s ideas for African unity and the use of force but instead have been impaled on a nasty, barbed hook.”<sup>329</sup>

In one last plea to Wilson on 11 December, Nkrumah confirmed that the main reason why Ghana was leaving the Commonwealth was that “Ghana’s continued membership of the Commonwealth has been misunderstood as is being exploited in

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<sup>327</sup> Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 391. Nkrumah even made it known that in case of diverging interests between Africa and the Commonwealth, Ghana would always side with the former, although this was probably still meant to be a bluff at the time, Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 248.

<sup>328</sup> Nkrumah, *Peace without Power*, p. 82.

<sup>329</sup> TNA, DO 195/246, Smedley to Chadwick, 11.12.1965.

an attempt to set up rival blocs in Africa which if not checked could defeat the objectives of African Unity,” and that if Britain did not comply with the OAU’s requests, Ghana would “break off diplomatic relations with Britain as soon as possible” after 15 December.<sup>330</sup> Despite a last-minute effort to buy some time by Ghana’s High Commissioner in London, Nkrumah reluctantly agreed to this final step of political rupture with the former colonial power, as of 16 December 1965.<sup>331</sup>

The break in relations between Ghana and Great Britain was, on the one hand, the unintended outcome of the Rhodesian crisis and of the internal political dynamics at the level of the OAU. For the OCAM states, constantly lambasted by Nkrumah as neocolonialist French stooges, being able to outmanoeuvre Ghana so as to force it to sever its ties with the Commonwealth was surely the sweetest possible payback.<sup>332</sup> On the other hand, it was the logical result of Nkrumah’s reckless and overambitious foreign policy. Believing that he would be able to play the British gentleman at Balmoral Castle and the Marxist revolutionary in Africa at alternate days of the week, he had pushed his luck too far.

The day after he had announced the break in relations with Britain in parliament, where the news was greeted with little enthusiasm, Nkrumah began trying to minimize the consequences of this act. He called for Smedley, who was planning his departure, to tell him that the break should be considered a “protest,” and that “he did not wish it to affect in any way [the] activities of British people working in Ghana.”<sup>333</sup> He also told him that “it had been forced on him by outside pressure and that he felt he had to make the gesture.”<sup>334</sup> The High Commissioner sensed that the president was being tempted by a possible about-turn, and suggested that they did

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<sup>330</sup> TNA, DO 195/246, Nkrumah to Wilson, 11.12.1965.

<sup>331</sup> Kwesi Armah told the prime minister in London that the words “as soon as possible” meant that there was still room for manoeuvre and time to avoid the break, but Nkrumah denied this when asked by Smedley, TNA, DO 195/246, Smedley to CRO, 15.12.1965. Cf. Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 248; Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 392-393.

<sup>332</sup> Foreign Minister Quaison-Sackey confirmed to Smedley that the greatest pressure that the OAU states severe their ties with Britain had come from the francophone states. TNA, DO 195/246, Record of a Meeting, 08.12.1965.

<sup>333</sup> TNA, DO 195/246, Smedley to CRO, 17.12.1965.

<sup>334</sup> TNA, DO 195/246, Smedley to CRO, 18.12.1965.

everything possible to facilitate him the task — “if, in the process, he loses further face in Africa so much the better.”<sup>335</sup>

It was thus arranged that while the High Commissioner and his immediate staff were of to leave, Britain would retain a consular section hosted at the Australian High Commission, and the Commercial Section would continue its work as British Trade Office.<sup>336</sup> Even Britain’s military training mission, the BJSTT, was ordered to stay in Ghana for the time being — Her Majesty’s Government did not wish to appear vindictive, at a time when African public opinion was already aroused by the Rhodesian issue.<sup>337</sup>

So was all the talk about the break in relations much ado about nothing? Would business go along as usual, and diplomatic relations be re-established in a few months, when the dust had settled over the Rhodesian issue? Britain’s Western allies were not satisfied at all with this outcome.<sup>338</sup> They considered that there had been considerable opposition to the break in relations among moderate members of Nkrumah’s cabinet, civil servants, and the military; if however now “the British cooperate with the Ghanaians to minimise the results of the break, those Ghanaians who counselled moderation will again be discredited.”<sup>339</sup>

The US chargé d’affaires in Accra believed that, in the past years, the combined action of US and UK leniency had convinced Nkrumah that he could hit at the West whenever he pleased with virtual impunity: “In breaking relations with the United Kingdom Nkrumah had again calculated that he would be able to have his cake and eat it — i.e. that he could get the political drama he wanted without it costing him anything of significance.”<sup>340</sup> This view, shared by the representatives of Canada and Australia, began finding followers in Britain, especially among those who reckoned

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<sup>335</sup> TNA, DO 195/246, Smedley to CRO, 17.12.1965.

<sup>336</sup> TNA, DO 153/35, Tesh to Bottomley, 13.01.1966.

<sup>337</sup> TNA, DO 195/246, Extract from minutes of a meeting of the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee, 22.12.1965.

<sup>338</sup> “The Americans, whose support on Rhodesia is important to us, are not at all happy at our attitude to Ghana. My American colleagues seem to be prepared to accept that ‘Ghana can wait’; but they hope it need not wait too long. They consider that as long as President Nkrumah and his present advisers are in power, Ghana is hostile and dangerous.” TNA, DO 153/35, Tesh to Bottomley, 13.01.1966.

<sup>339</sup> TNA, DO 195/246, Telegram, 30.12.1965.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

that keeping the BJSTT in place was a contradiction and a mistake. A joint memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Minister for Overseas Development had following to say about the British military training team:

In Ghana there is a British Joint Services Training Team consisting of over 200 officers and men and civilians, together with numerous dependants. This Team costs approximately £½ m. per annum of which we pay half. Ghana is of no strategic importance to us. Our concern to maintain the Team there has been based first on our desire to keep the Ghanaian armed forces aligned with Britain; second to keep open a modest outlet for the sale of British arms and equipment; third to enable the Ghana Government to be sufficiently well equipped to maintain internal law and order; and fourth to use the Team as a weapon of British influence in Ghana. This influence has now failed. Our other interests are marginal.

[...]

In these circumstances the Commonwealth Secretary suggests that, while his colleagues should agree in principle to withdraw the Team now that Ghana has broken off diplomatic relations with us, that withdrawal should not take place at once, but that implementation of the decision should be deferred pending developments. Meanwhile the British Commander of the Team has been told to let it be known locally that should Ghana leave the Commonwealth the departure of the team will systematically follow. Since Nkrumah is constantly in fear for his own security this may in the immediate future give him pause for thought.<sup>341</sup>

As regards the pro-British alignment of the Ghanaian armed forces, Whitehall's policy had been a success.<sup>342</sup> The military had all been trained in the Sandhurst tradition except for the Presidential Guard, and maintained strong emotional ties to England. They were of course aware of their continued dependence on British technical assistance and staff, especially for the development of the air force and navy. The news that the BJSTT might be withdrawn as a consequence of the diplomatic rupture came thus as a shock to the Ghanaian generals. However, their political influence on the present regime was negligible, which was also a very consequence of the British training they had received, and the tradition of non-involvement in politics which they were accustomed to follow.<sup>343</sup> Yet at that stage,

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<sup>341</sup> TNA, DO 195/246, Cabinet, Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, Ghana and Tanzania, 21.12.1965.

<sup>342</sup> Commenting on the 1966 coup of the 'non-political' Ghana army, Bing wrote that "what happened, as a result of the British teaching of officers that they must remain neutral, was that they accepted, as a neutral view of Ghanaian affairs, the highly-prejudiced accounts appearing in the British press. The 'non-political' officers set out to destroy not the regime that existed in fact but the regime which they had been told existed by the experts of the Western world in Ghana." Reap The Whirlwind, p. 422.

<sup>343</sup> "It is clear that the present senior officers of the Armed Forces are completely dominated by the President and have not the slightest intention of doing anything to oppose him even when they are convinced that his policies are against

the British too began questioning the appropriateness of this approach: “It may be even that by maintaining a non-political tradition in the Armed Forces proper, we are sterilizing potential opposition,” a staff of the High Commission regrettably argued before leaving the country.<sup>344</sup>

Until 1964, the main plots to topple the CPP regime had come from environments other than the armed forces, i.e. either from the political opposition, outside or inside the CPP, or from the police forces, as in the case of the 1964 attempt on Nkrumah’s life. In all these cases, and others which followed upon, the British were asked for help by the plotters, but London decided against any support, although it did not collaborate with the regime in the repression of these conspiracies.<sup>345</sup> In 1965 though discontentment among the army with Nkrumah and the CPP had reached significant levels, and there had been insistent rumours of an imminent military coup d’état over the first half of the year.

From the British and Western point of view, the main problem tied to this was the inaptness of the plotters, and their lack of coordination and resoluteness, which made things easy for Nkrumah’s secret police.<sup>346</sup> The anxiousness about a possible involvement in an armed conflict in Rhodesia, after the bad experience of the Congo Crisis, and the example set by the military coup d’état in Nigeria in January 1966, pushed though the higher ranks of the army, with the notable exception of the generals, to prepare for another try. The occasion was given by Nkrumah’s mission to Vietnam, in February 1966, yet the impulse for action came not from the armed forces, rather from the police, where opposition to the regime (apart from the secret police) had been brewing for some time.

While many reconstructions of the coup that toppled Nkrumah and his regime come from the report of a secondary figure in the military revolt, Major Afrifa’s *The Ghana Coup*, a more reliable record is provided by a British report based on accounts

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the best interests of the Forces and the country,” Colonel Lawrie, defence adviser to the High Commission, argued pessimistically. TNA, DO 195/246, Lawrie to McNeill, 20.12.1965.

<sup>344</sup> TNA, DO 153/35, Tesh to Bottomley, 13.01.1966.

<sup>345</sup> TNA, PREM 13/2677, Snelling to Wright, 25.03.1965.

<sup>346</sup> TNA, DO 195/211, Chadwick to Snelling, 02.07.1965.

by the High Commission's defence advisers.<sup>347</sup> According to this account, "the instigator and the brain behind" the coup was an old acquaintance of the British High Commission, the Head of the Special Branch and Police Commissioner John Harrley. Presented as "a man educated in the Western tradition," a "sincere Christian" and staunch anti-communist, he objected to Ghana's drift to the left, and as he saw that there were no more constitutional means to oppose Nkrumah, he chose the conspiratorial way.<sup>348</sup> First, he devised a plan which involved Nkrumah's kidnapping, for mid-January 1964, but the plan was thwarted by the failed attempt on Nkrumah's life at Flagstaff House on 2 January, which led to a purge inside the police, but brought him, unexpectedly, a promotion to Police Commissioner.

After the events of January, Harrley saw that a coup staged without the support of the armed forces was bound to fail. In June 1965, while Nkrumah attended the Commonwealth meeting in London, he disclosed his plans to General Ankrah, the Army Commander, who reacted favourably. Harlley tried to involve also the Chief of Defence Staff, General Otu, but the secret service got wind of the plot, perhaps alerted by Otu himself; both generals were dismissed at his return and replaced by Aferi and Barwah, now promoted to the rank of Major-General.

Many officers resented this sudden demotion of Otu and Ankrah, and so Harrley approached the two new army brigades commanders, Colonel Kotoka and Colonel Okran, who were both "ideally placed to execute Harrley's plans."<sup>349</sup> From them he received immediate assurances of support, and "the operation which achieved its fulfilment on 24 February, 1966" was planned.<sup>350</sup> In a few hours of fighting with Nkrumah's presidential guard, and at the cost of thirty-two lost lives, the armed forces achieved what the Western countries considered a "revolution," i.e. the

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<sup>347</sup> TNA, DO 153/49, Miles to Bottomley, 28.03.1966. Rooney writes that Afrifa was one of the three masterminds of the coup, but in fact Afrifa owes his notoriety more to the book he wrote than to his actual involvement in the coup, *The Political kingdom*, p. 251; cf. Bing, *Reap The Whirlwind*, p. 420.

<sup>348</sup> According to the report, the trigger to act had come when "Nkrumah instructed him to select three officers of the Special Branch for training in intelligence work in the Soviet Union," TNA, DO 153/49, Miles to Bottomley, 28.03.1966.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.* For the details of the coup, see Afrifa's book.

toppling of one of the postcolonial African governments which most annoyed them.

As the British diplomat who produced the above quoted report summed up:

Thus ended a wicked regime, that had been richly endowed at birth and had embarked on independence with high hopes and promise, but which had in the end brought such disillusionment and misery in its train that its downfall was greeted with the universal acclaim of the Ghanaian people. In its place stood a Government prepared to look facts in the face and, by the immediate restoration of diplomatic relations, to express the warm and genuine feelings for Britain which Ghanaians, under the Nkrumah regime, had had to suppress.<sup>351</sup>

To be sure, Ghana raised high expectations not only among its people and in Africa, but also in the United Kingdom, where it was seen as a British experiment of black statehood that might show the right way to the remaining colonial territories nearing independence. The British press had begun very quickly though with the stoning of the former *enfant prodige*, as soon as it became clear that Nkrumah, while cherishing the Commonwealth link, was about to set up a revisionist regional power, which aspired to overturn the rules of the game at the economic and foreign policy level, and interfere with Britain's plans for decolonization in Africa. The CPP regime fell in the first place under the weight of its own contradictions. However, it is also clear that Britain helped to set the stage for the termination of what it considered an experiment gone out of control.

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

## Excursus: Nkrumah, the West, and the Congo Crisis

### Ghana as Stabilizing Force

The Congo Crisis began right after the day of the Congo's independence on 30 June 1960. It is mostly considered having lasted until the end of the Katangan secession in January 1963, although the Congo returned to some stability only after the power seizure of General Mobutu in November 1965.<sup>352</sup> It was the first major political issue on which Ghana's interests and those of the Western countries began significantly to diverge. Considering the complexity of this decolonization crisis — the first in which the Cold War was dragged into the African continent<sup>353</sup> — discussing it in all details would go well beyond the scope of the present research. Nonetheless, in view of the extent to which both Ghana and the West were implicated in it — both, with different roles, took part in the United Nations Operation in the Congo (*Operation des Nations Unies au Congo*, ONUC) and tried to influence the internal affairs of the country — the Congo Crisis has often been regarded as a watershed for Ghana and its foreign policy, and no discourse on Nkrumah's foreign policy can possibly leave it out of consideration.<sup>354</sup>

Diverging interests and attitudes between Ghana and the Western bloc began to be evident in regard to the Congo as of mid-August 1960. Until that moment there was a fairly large consensus, in Western Europe, the United States and also in Africa, that the Ghanaian government could play a constructive role in help bringing stability to the Congo by exercising a moderating influence on the government of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who even before he was elected was already considered in the

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<sup>352</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XX, Congo Crisis.

<sup>353</sup> The Congo Crisis and the intervention of the great powers in the same, a classic subject of international politics studies, has been often analyzed in the perspective of the East-West conflict, see e.g. Kalb, Madeleine G. *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa, from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. New York: Macmillan, 1982; Mahoney, J.F.K.: *Ordeal in Africa*. Other authors, however, have pointed at other causal factors besides to Cold-War rivalry, such as access to strategic raw materials (uranium, copper), geopolitical considerations (Congo as the vast heart of Africa), and NATO solidarity feelings, see Nwaubani, "Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis"; as well as at commercial conflicts among Western mining companies, cf. Gibbs, David N. "Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations, and the Congo Crisis of 1960-1: A Reinterpretation." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 1993): 163–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/161349> [doi:10.2307/161349] [10.06.2013].

<sup>354</sup> Cf. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 119-157; Milne, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 144-150.



West a dangerous demagogue.<sup>355</sup> This trust in Ghana as the Congo's "elder brother" appeared clearly when early in May 1960, two months before the Congo's independence, Nkrumah was in London to attend the Commonwealth conference of heads of government.

He met with Harold Macmillan at Downing Street for a preliminary talk, and expressed worries for the high expectations that some countries were putting on him to influence problematic situations such as Guinea and the Congo. Nkrumah said he had recently received the visit of the Belgian and the US ambassador, and that "both had expressed alarm about a vacuum developing in the Congo," as well as the hope that Ghana "might be able to help in a way which no European power could do."<sup>356</sup> Nkrumah confirmed his government's availability "to help the newly emerging territories of Africa and to keep them in the Western sector," but told Macmillan confidentially that they could not possibly fulfil this role without help from outside: "Ghana is too small."<sup>357</sup>

The British prime minister in fact did not respond to this cry for help and referred to the upcoming discussions at the Commonwealth level; however, the episode is significant, if compared to the later developments, as it shows that until the first half of 1960 the West still put much confidence in Nkrumah and in the "Ghana experiment" as a role model for Africa.<sup>358</sup> However, Ghana had begun following the political situation in the Congo only since 1958, as the Belgians had thus far largely isolated their colony from the outside world. The two Congolese political movements which attracted most international attention were the *Alliance des Bakongo* (ABAKO), led by Joseph Kasavubu, and the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC) of Patrice Lumumba. While the former, still tied to a tribal, ethnic identity like most Congolese parties, had a more conservative political profile and advocated a federalist solution for the country's constitution, the latter raised hopes in Ghana and

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<sup>355</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 99, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 28.04.1960

<sup>356</sup> TNA, FO 371/146811, "Record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and Dr. Nkrumah," 02.05.1960.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid..

<sup>358</sup> Cf. Mohan, Jitendra. "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 3 (Oct. 1969): 369–406, here p. 372. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/159059> [21.10.2014].

in nationalist African circles as a non-tribal, modern political movement with which to start a dialogue, an impression reinforced by the encounter between Nkrumah and Lumumba at the All-African People's Conference in Accra in December 1958.

As of 1959 first-hand accounts of the situation in the Belgian colony began to trickle in, making it possible for Ghana to intervene to some extent in the Congo's decolonization process.<sup>359</sup> The young Congolese politician was said to be an admirer of Nkrumah, and aspired to establish an internally centralized, internationally non-aligned government like the latter had done in Ghana.<sup>360</sup> Yet only from the beginning of 1960 onwards, when the Belgians allowed the first official political contacts, visits and exchanges became more frequent.<sup>361</sup>

In April 1960, after the Round Table in Brussels between the Congolese parties and the Belgian government had finally set the date for independence to 30 June, Nkrumah sent an exploratory mission to Léopoldville (today's Kinshasa), led by Ghana's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ako Adjei, to "set a foot on the Congo soil," and to prepare the ground for the opening of an embassy, which would be headed by A.Y.K. Djin. They were greeted by the Belgian Governor-General, but were not able to meet anyone of the Congo's political leaders apart from one of Lumumba's allies from the Kivu region, as all the others were busy with their campaign for the upcoming political elections.<sup>362</sup>

The results of the elections, published in early June, confirmed Nkrumah's intuition that Lumumba was the only political figure who, at that moment, could hold this huge territory together. The MNC came first, turning out as the only movement capable of gathering a large consensus on a non-regional and non-tribal basis.

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<sup>359</sup> George Padmore, in particular, helped to organize the legal defence for the Abako leadership following their arrest after the Léopoldville riots in January 1959, after an appeal in this sense from Kasavubu was received in Accra, see Mohan, Jitendra. "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations", p. 371.

<sup>360</sup> For Nwaubani, "Lumumba consciously imitated Nkrumah's pattern of politics", see "Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis." p. 611-612.

<sup>361</sup> For some 1959 reports from the Belgian Congo to Ghana see PRAAD, RG 17/1/43.

<sup>362</sup> The leader from Kivu was Anicet Kashamura, later minister of information and cultural affairs in the Lumumba government for the Centre de Regroupement Africain (Cerea) movement, said to be a leftist, who then accompanied the Ghanaian party to visit Accra, and later, according to the British Consul-General, surprisingly came back to praise the achievements of Belgian colonialism in the Congo, saying that "the economic condition of the Congolese people was much better than anything he had seen in Ghana". TNA, FO 371/146685, Telegrams from the Consulate-General in Léopoldville to Foreign Office, 07/08/14.04.1960.

However, the electoral system produced a highly fragmented parliament, in which eighty per cent of the seats were divided among ten main parties and the rest between minor regroupments. Lumumba's party obtained thirty-three seats and could count on some allies, but it was clear that stability depended on complicated negotiations between parties representing different tribes, regions and interests.<sup>363</sup>

The relations between the MNC, which advocated a minimum involvement of the Belgians in the Congo's political and economic life after independence, and Brussels, which was eager to protect the vast Belgian investments in the mining sector in Katanga as well as the lives of the 70,000 Belgians living in the colony deteriorated rapidly when Brussels began to support Lumumba's adversaries, trying to limit his political influence. The British in Ghana had accepted the clear verdict spoken by all elections preceding independence, which crowned Nkrumah as the most popular leader, and had succeeded in organizing a relatively quiet transition to self-rule; the Belgians instead intervened heavily in the Congo's political affairs, supporting first the ABAKO, and later the secessionist leader of Katanga, Moïse Tshombe. Lumumba responded fomenting anti-Belgian resentments, also at the level of the armed forces (*Force Publique*), thus undermining the only element of stability in a huge territory whose administration and infrastructure was rapidly breaking down.<sup>364</sup>

The Belgians hoped that Nkrumah would exercise a moderating influence on Lumumba and so, at least in part, he did. Through his ambassador, Nkrumah convinced Lumumba to come to terms with the ABAKO, helping to bring about the government of national unity with him as prime minister and Kasavubu as president of the republic.<sup>365</sup> However, the fluid situation in the vast "heart of Africa" had whetted Nkrumah's own political appetite, as he recognized in the alliance with Lumumba the chance to finally kick-start his project for a continental African government.

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<sup>363</sup> See TNA, FO 371/146651, Paper: Independence in the Congo, Special Branch Headquarters, Kampala, Uganda, August 1960.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations", p. 372-373.

## The Crisis Erupts

At the beginning of July the Congolese soldiers in the *Force Publique* revolted against their Belgian officers, and law and order broke down in the country. The mining district of Katanga declared its independence and the Belgians unilaterally sent in a military expeditionary corps allegedly to protect their citizens. Nkrumah declared it a neocolonialist attempt to regain control of a recently-liberated African territory, and promised Lumumba all the support he could give him to repel the “imperialist aggression.”<sup>366</sup> In order to keep in touch with Lumumba, who quickly demanded military assistance on the part of Ghana, Nkrumah needed, however, the support of the British imperialists, as Ghana and the Congo don’t share borders, and Ghana at the time still relied on British officers, equipment and advisers for its young armed forces. The Ghanaians thus asked London whether two Royal Air Force planes, arriving by chance in Accra on 10 July, could be used to transport an exploratory, political-military mission to Léopoldville. The British cabinet initially turned down the request, saying “we are not involved now in the Congo and do not wish to be,”<sup>367</sup> but then, albeit somewhat reluctantly, changed their mind, out of fear that if they did not, the Soviet, who already had five civilian aircraft standing by in Accra, would step in and do it instead.<sup>368</sup>

The Ghanaian delegation, headed by the minister of foreign affairs and a colonel for Ghana’s armed forces, was able to reach Léopoldville by a Royal Air Force De Havilland Comet on 11 July and to make contact with Lumumba, with whom communications had previously broken down.<sup>369</sup> On 13 July, the Ghanaian government gave a public statement, confirming that they were ready to assist the Congo, militarily and in any other form, in the context of a United Nations mission

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<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> TNA, FO 371/146804, Telegram from the CRO to Certain High Commissions, 11.07.1960. Cf. TNA, FO 371/146805, Telegram from Accra Embassy to CRO, 25.07.1960.

<sup>368</sup> TNA, FO 371/146805, “R.A.F. Transport for Ghanaian Contingent to the Congo”, Smith, 29.07.1960.

<sup>369</sup> London’s sudden volte-face in regard to the use of its planes was also due to the insight, suggested from New York, that the Ghanaian presence was “one of the more important stabilizing influences in the United Nations force”, and that therefore it was desirable “to do all we can to get them speedily to the Congo”, TNA FO 371/146804, United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations (Dixon) to Foreign Office, 16.07.1960.

but if necessary, also on their own.<sup>370</sup> This was largely a bluff — Ghana, in point of fact, had not the technical means to act alone, and was also keen to avoid further unilateral interventions by external powers. Luckily for Nkrumah, at the time the UN was living the “heroic,” pioneering phase of its peacekeeping effort, and Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld “unhesitatingly threw himself into the organisation of the UN’s response” to the Congo Crisis.<sup>371</sup>

On the same day when the Security Council — with three notable abstentions, China (Taiwan), France and Britain — approved its first resolution on the Crisis, Major-General H.T. Alexander, Ghana’s British seconded Chief of Defence Staff, arrived in Léopoldville, just in time, as the British ambassador noted, “to restrain [the] Belgian Commander in Chief” (“overwrought and hysterical as the whole civil[ian] population”) from attacking the Force Publique in Leopoldville.<sup>372</sup> From 15 to 25 July more than 2,300 Ghanaian troops, with their British officers, medical personnel and technical staff, were airlifted with mostly British and American, but also Egyptian and Soviet planes from Accra to the Congo, making the Ghanaian contingent the largest single of the UN Force, amounting to about one fourth of the total.<sup>373</sup>

In the following four years, Nkrumah put most of his hopes of being able to influence the political situation in the Congo in the United Nations, to which Lumumba and Kasavubu had appealed at the outset of the Crisis for help in restoring the authority of their government in the country and to defeat the Katangan secessionists. Both Nkrumah and Lumumba would have to learn though — and the latter would pay this insight with his life — that the UN was by far not the neutral institution dedicated to international law they had expected, rather “a profoundly

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<sup>370</sup> The Secretary-General urged Nkrumah not to proceed on his own but to wait “until his offer could be integrated in the United Nations plan”, *ibid.*, Telegram from United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations to Foreign Office, 14.07.1960.

<sup>371</sup> James, Alan. *Britain and the Congo crisis : 1960-63*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1996, p. 20.

<sup>372</sup> TNA FO 371/146805, From Leopoldville (Scott) to Foreign Office, 16.07.1960.

<sup>373</sup> Macmillan explained to Nkrumah Britain’s initial hesitation to participate in the airlift by saying that they did not want to be exposed to Soviet accusations of undue interference in the Congo’s internal affairs, and wanted to act only within the framework of the United Nations. TNA, FO 371/146811, Outward Telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office (Macmillan) to Accra (Nkrumah), 19.07.1960. Nkrumah was scolded by Hammarskjöld for having accepted the Soviet aircraft, see Nwaubani, “Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis.”

conservative institution,” much more committed to anti-communism than to anti-colonialism.<sup>374</sup>

Nkrumah saw in Lumumba the Congo’s only true nationalist, and in his radical brand of nationalism the only chance to make of the Congo a really independent state that would be able to resist Belgian neocolonialism and the infiltration of the Cold War. However, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld and his Special Representative Ralph Bunche were from the start biased against Lumumba, and had very soon come to agree with the United States government that the Congolese prime minister was, in the best case, an utterly unreliable and unpredictable figure, and in the worst case a “Soviet stooge.”<sup>375</sup>

Hammarskjöld and the State Department agreed that the secession of Katanga (masterminded by the Anglo-Belgian mining consortium *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga*),<sup>376</sup> the presence of Belgian soldiers and advisers in Katanga, and the possible exposure of the “heart of Africa” to Cold War tensions were all serious issues. However they considered, to the opposite of Nkrumah, that the solution of the problem passed through the widest possible neutralization of Lumumba and his followers, who espoused a militant opposition to Belgium’s influence. While Ghana reckoned that in order to keep Africa out of the Cold War, the Congo should be insulated from *both* Eastern and Western imperialism, the Secretary-General was unanimous with Washington and London that in order to achieve this it was essential to protect the Congo from *Soviet* influence.<sup>377</sup> And since Lumumba, incautiously, had never shown any particular shyness in regard to Soviet offers for help, his removal from the Congo’s political scene became to be seen in New York too as a fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of stability in the country.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Mohan, “Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations,” p. 404.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>376</sup> The fact that Katanga could exist as a separate entity only thanks to the financial support from the *Union Minière*, which also provided advisers, technicians and mercenaries, was an open secret, and Nkrumah incessantly denounced this flagrant example of neocolonialism, cf. Gibbs, “Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations, and the Congo Crisis of 1960-1: A Reinterpretation,” p. 165.

<sup>377</sup> Mohan, “Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations”, p. 384-385.

<sup>378</sup> James, Britain and the Congo crisis, p. 70. Lumumba had already threatened on 17 July to accept Soviet aid if Belgium’s troops were not withdrawn within 48 hours, see Mohan, “Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations,” p. 383.

The partiality of the UN's approach to the Congo Crisis was made possible already by the vagueness of the text of the first resolution approved on 14 July.<sup>379</sup> Quite soon, to the embitterment of Lumumba, Nkrumah and the other Afro-Asian leaders who advocated a military solution to the Katangan problem, it became clear that the Secretary-General did not interpret the letter of the resolution as a commitment to intervene militarily to help the central government, but judged the secession a chiefly "internal political problem," to be solved by political negotiations and not by force.<sup>380</sup> In this approach the Hammarskjöld was supported by Belgium, of course, on whose civilian advisers and military Tshombe's regime depended, but also by the British government. Britain felt an instinctive solidarity, as a fellow colonial power and member of NATO, with Belgium, and had also in the defence of the conspicuous participation of British capital in the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga*, the world's single largest copper producer, a substantial financial stake to defend in the matter.<sup>381</sup>

## The Katangan Issue

The British saw in the re-establishment of "law and order" the basic political goal of the UN Force, and in Katanga an "island of order and tranquillity" not to be perturbed by armed intervention.<sup>382</sup> So by the end of July, when the UN contingent had more or less stably established their presence in the whole of the Congo except for the secessionist province, the attitude towards Katanga had become the touchstone for the attitude of all parties involved in the Congo Crisis. The government in Léopoldville showed increasing signs of nervousness at the prospect that the UN Force would not help them to regain quickly control of Katanga while Nkrumah, feeling the embarrassment that Ghana's troops as part of the UN mission

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<sup>379</sup> In the resolution the Security Council called upon Belgium to withdraw its troops, but authorized the Secretary-General only "to provide such military assistance as may be necessary until [...] the national security council forces may be able, in the opinion of the Government, to meet fully their tasks", without specifying whether forcibly upholding the country's unity against secessionist forces belonged or not to these tasks. United Nations Security Council Resolution 143 (1960), 14.07.1960. [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/143\(1960\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/143(1960)) [15.02.2016].

<sup>380</sup> Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations," p. 386.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44-47; 133 ff.

<sup>382</sup> James, *Britain and the Congo crisis*, p. 29-33.

were not supporting Lumumba's government as he had promised they would, began again agitating the spectre of a military expedition outside the UN framework.

On 10 August, newspapers reported that Nkrumah had written letters to various African states, declaring that "if no New United Nations solution was forthcoming, then Ghana would lend to the Congo such armed support as the Congo might request ... I hope we shall also have your support in any military steps which become necessary."<sup>383</sup> Ghana and the other more radical African states had, of course, limited possibilities to effectively change the situation on the ground by unilateral measures; nonetheless these kind of statements raised worries in the West, as they might have given Moscow chances to show its solidarity with the African anti-imperialist struggle. Furthermore, they put a strain on Ghana's relations with the British, who were getting increasingly weary of Accra's anti-colonial activism.

On 2 August Nkrumah wrote a letter to Macmillan, appreciating Britain's help in the airlift, but demanding also further British officers, so as "to speed up the expansion of my Army", presently engaged in the training of officers for the Congolese Force Publique. "You yourself," Nkrumah wrote, "will realise the vital importance of having a disciplined highly trained Army in Ghana, ready to act instantly as it has done in Congo, should the need arise." The Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, noted to this proposal: "I cannot think of any part of Africa where their use would not raise fearful complications [...] I hope we shall go fairly slow in training new units of the Ghana Army."<sup>384</sup>

On 12 August it was announced that Hammarskjöld, strengthened in his approach by the Security Council's third Resolution on the Congo ("the United Nations Force in the Congo will not be a party to or in any way intervene in or be used to influence the outcome of any internal conflict, constitutional or otherwise"), had managed to open a negotiating table with Moïse Tshombe on the modalities of the entry of the UN's troops in Katanga, and the consequent withdrawal of the Belgian contingent.

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<sup>383</sup> TNA, FO 371/146805, Telegram from Addis Ababa to Foreign Office, 10.08.1960. Similar letters went out, of course, also to other independent African states, such as the Sudan.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., Minutes (Howard-Smith), African Department, 06.08.1960.



This, at first, was met with satisfaction also by the Afro-Asians at the UN. Nkrumah confirmed the British ambassador, who had come to see him to express the British government's anxiety about his recent statements, that if the UN achieved to replace the Belgian troops in Katanga with its own, "he would be entirely satisfied for United Nations troops to maintain law and order and 'hold the ring' while the things settled between Lumumba and Tshombe."<sup>385</sup> However, Nkrumah was later bitterly disappointed when he learned that during the negotiations, Hammarskjöld had given in to most of Tshombe's requests, among other, that no "communist" UN troops — such as Ghanaians and Guineans — would enter Katanga. As a matter of fact, to sit at a table with the UN's Secretary General gave the secessionist leader a minimum degree of international recognition, thus contributing to stabilize his regime.<sup>386</sup>

At this point of the Crisis, the growing lack of ability of Ghana to influence any of the parties became evident. On the one hand, the criticism he voiced vis-à-vis Macmillan and Eisenhower against the NATO powers, saying that the latter were "unable to take an impartial view of the events in the Congo," merely succeeded in arouse irritation in London and Washington.<sup>387</sup> On the other, Nkrumah failed to exercise much moderating guidance on the Congo's prime minister, although it had been announced that the Congo was ready to join the Ghana-Guinea Union, and therefore a closer coordination between the three could be expected.<sup>388</sup> He was aware of Lumumba's increasing isolation, both internally and at the international level, and he also knew that if Lumumba accepted Soviet military aid to start a campaign against Tshombe, this would give the West an excuse to brand him a communist and undermine him.

Through his ambassador, Nkrumah repeatedly warned Lumumba about the importance of keeping the support of the United Nations, stressing "that their

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<sup>385</sup> TNA, FO 371/146805, Telegram from Accra to CRO, 13.08.1960. The Foreign Secretary commended the High Commissioner for his intervention, and encouraged him to continue seeking dialogue with the Ghanaian president, *ibid.*, Telegram from CRO to Accra, 14.08.1960.

<sup>386</sup> Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations", p. 386.

<sup>387</sup> TNA, FO 371/146805, exchange of letters between Nkrumah and Macmillan, 12/22.08.1960. Cf. FRUS, 1958–1960 Volume XIV, Africa, Document 164, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 06.08.1960.

<sup>388</sup> TNA, FO 371/146640, Telegram from Léopoldville (Scott) to Foreign Office, 29.07.1960.

common interests would be seriously impaired, and their objective in the Congo frustrated, by any attitude of hostility towards the U.N. or by the withdrawal or the collapse” of the UN Force.<sup>389</sup> Yet to no avail: Lumumba was firmly intentioned to crush the Katangan rebellion, with or without the UN’s help. On 14 August Lumumba wrote a letter to Hammarskjöld, contesting the view that the Security Council’s mandate compelled the UN Force to be neutral in the Katanga matter, and requested the UN’s support for a military campaign against the secessionists, the transferral of the control of the Congo’s airfields to Congolese forces, as well as a number of other demands, judged totally irreceivable in New York.<sup>390</sup>

As he saw that the UN’s help was not forthcoming, Lumumba declared having lost his confidence in the Secretary-General, and gave his ramshackle army the order to prepare the recapture of Katanga and the adjacent rebellious province of South Kasai, for the purpose of which he accepted a Soviet offer for means of transportation, about one hundred trucks and fifteen to twenty airplanes.<sup>391</sup> From this moment on, Lumumba’s fate was sealed, as the international anti-Lumumba front, comprising in particular the UN Secretariat, Washington, London, Brussels, as well as Paris, put all their weight on the plate, joining forces with the steadily growing group of Lumumba’s internal enemies, so as to have him removed for good from the political scene.<sup>392</sup>

## **The Fall of Lumumba**

The United States government was busy, at least since the beginning of August, trying to “bring the Belgians back into the Congo,” as Secretary of State Herter

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>390</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 175, Editorial Note. Hammarskjöld was convinced that Lumumba’s letters to him had been drafted by either a Belgian communist serving as his chief of cabinet, or maybe by a Soviet embassy attaché, see *ibid.*, Document 180, Memorandum of Discussion at the 456th Meeting of the National Security Council, 18.08.1960.

<sup>391</sup> Mohan, “Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations,” p. 380-381. Cf. James, *Britain and the Congo crisis*, p. 63.

<sup>392</sup> The encirclement of Lumumba by the West was completed by the World Bank, which had refused to disburse to the Congolese government the remaining tranche of of a loan it hade made to the Congo before it became independent, FRUS, 1958–1960 Volume XIV, Africa, Document 33, Memorandum of Discussion at the 456th Meeting of the National Security Council, 18.08.1960.

described US policy during a National Security Council meeting.<sup>393</sup> This was a logical corollary of the basic assumption that, in general, Africa's future development depended on the continual of the close connection with Europe.<sup>394</sup> In order to achieve this, the State Department was putting pressure on Belgium to accept the withdrawal of their troops from Katanga and the military bases of Kitona and Banana, so as "to restore and maintain [their] economic presence there and deny it to Communists."<sup>395</sup> Before the outset of the campaign of the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC, the former *Force Publique*) against Katanga and South Kasai, the United States was still prepared, reluctantly, to deal with Lumumba, although they confirmed the Belgians that "his reliability [was] open to serious question," and already worked on a "program of reinsurance against Lumumba."<sup>396</sup>

As long as Lumumba and the Afro-Asian states managed to keep the Soviet presence in the Congo within acceptable boundaries, the United States contained its antipathy, and tried to convince its allies to do so as well. On 12 August Herter cabled the embassy in Léopoldville that, as Lumumba seemed to have consolidated his power, and that the opposition to Lumumba appeared "uncoordinated and disorganized" as well as "in favor of [a] loosely associated independent states [...] vulnerable to Soviet penetration," the best option was for the time being "to take a more or less neutral position toward Lumumba," while carrying on a "re-insurance program of cultivating and strengthening potentially effective and friendly rival politicians".<sup>397</sup>

By mid-August the break between Lumumba and Hammarskjöld, and the news that the former had accepted Soviet aid, had made this wait-and-see position obsolete though. From that moment on, the question became how to oust as quickly as possible Lumumba without losing the support of the Afro-Asians, and without

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid., Document 33, Memorandum of Discussion at the 456th Meeting of the National Security Council, 18.08.1960.

<sup>394</sup> John Foster Dulles considered Africa "from a North-South viewpoint [...] the hinterland of Western Europe." Ibid., Document 13, Editorial Note; cf. *ibid.*, Document 23, Memorandum of Discussion at the 438th Meeting of the National Security Council, 24.03.1960.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., Document 160, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Belgium, 02.08.1960.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 173, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Congo, 12.08.1960.

creating even more chaos than already in place. So while the American ambassador in the Congo, Clare Timberlake, for the time being still held the view that “Lumumba’s elimination would remove one problem, [but] it might well create many more,” the idea of an attempt on the Congo’s prime minister began to gain increasing support in Western circles, especially among the CIA.<sup>398</sup> By 17 August Timberlake’s reports became more alarmist, confirming the view held in Washington that Lumumba was “playing the Commie game,” and was being pushed by his left-wing advisers and allies to chase the UN out of the country, expel all Westerners, take over their properties, and bring in Eastern bloc experts to run the nationalized businesses: “the Commie design now seems suddenly clear,” Timberlake warned Washington, “it is already late.”<sup>399</sup>

Ghana’s position in this conflict between Lumumba on one side and the UN and the West on the other was becoming increasingly awkward. Hammarskjöld was telling the Americans that he was worried about him and his “ambitions for leading a large African state,” and that he believed “he may be working with Lumumba in the hope of taking him over.”<sup>400</sup> And also the US representative at the United Nations, Henry Cabot Lodge, urged the State Department to “try to get to Nkrumah who is reported to be [the] man who is steering Lumumba.”<sup>401</sup>

The distance between Ghana and the Americans should in fact never have aroused, as both had always asseverated their support for the UN and for its role in the Congo Crisis, and the Ghanaian contingent under General Alexander had greatly contributed to stabilize the situation on the ground. Yet if Nkrumah was a supporter for a UN-based solution, and held so much leverage on Lumumba as everybody said, why didn’t he put pressure on Lumumba to de-escalate the confrontation with Hammarskjöld?

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<sup>398</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 22. Cf. FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 178, Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, 17.08.1960. Also in Britain the assassination of Lumumba began gaining support, see James, *Britain and the Congo Crisis*, p. 63.

<sup>399</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 179, Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, Léopoldville, August 17, 1960, 4 p.m.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, Document 180, Memorandum of Discussion at the 456th Meeting of the National Security Council, 18.08.1960.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, Document 184, Telegram From the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State, 19.08.1960.

The conclusion that many in Washington held ready was that Nkrumah had sold out to the Soviets too, and was to be held responsible for Lumumba's increasingly radical course.<sup>402</sup> The Western diplomats on the spot did not share this view. The British High Commissioner in Accra was still convinced that Nkrumah would not allow for Ghana's troops to be used in support of Lumumba outside of the UN command, and his Canadian and American colleagues agreed.<sup>403</sup> The latter, in particular, on 25 August wrote a telegram to the State Department to reaffirm that in his view, Ghana's "apparent drift towards [the] Soviets" was not "a turning away from the West", rather a more active pursuit of the policy of positive neutralism.<sup>404</sup> Yet in Washington there was a rather large consensus around the definition of "genuine neutralism" that Secretary of State Dillon had given ("friendly to the West and to free enterprise"), and Nkrumah's attitude fitted less and less that description.<sup>405</sup>

In any case, a truly equidistant neutralism was to no avail to the US government's plans for the Congo, which passed through the liquidation of Lumumba. On 25 August, the Congo's prime minister welcomed the delegations of many independent African states in Léopoldville for an All-African Conference, saying:

We must oppose the enemies of freedom with a coalition of free men. Our common destiny is now being decided here in the Congo. [...]

We know the objects of the West. Yesterday they divided us on the level of a tribe, clan and village. Today, with Africa liberating herself, they seek to divide us on the level of states. They want to create antagonistic blocs, satellites, and, having begun from that stage of the cold war, deepen the division in order to perpetuate their rule. I think I shall not be making a mistake if I say that the united Africa of today rejects these intrigues. That is why we have chosen the policy of positive neutralism, which is the only acceptable policy allowing us to preserve our dignity.<sup>406</sup>

The African countries convened in Léopoldville — mostly to be accounted for the group of the "radicals", i.e. Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, the Provisional Algerian Government, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, and

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<sup>402</sup> For Nwaubani, "by insisting on Lumumba's restoration, Nkrumah put himself at sharp odds with the USA. And by the logic of guilt by association, Washington categorized him a 'communist', the label assigned to Lumumba." See "Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis," p. 620.

<sup>403</sup> TNA, FO 371/146777, Telegram from Accra to Commonwealth Relations Office, 26.08.1960.

<sup>404</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 299, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 25.08.1960,

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., Document 33, Memorandum of Discussion at the 456th Meeting of the National Security Council, 18.08.1960.

<sup>406</sup> Lumumba, Patrice. *Fighter for Africa's Freedom*. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1961, p. 19-25. Transcribed by Thomas Schmidt, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/lumumba/1960/08/25.htm> [16.02.2016].

the United Arab Republic —expressed their solidarity with their Congolese hosts, and recommended the convening of a conference of African heads of state and government before the next session of the UN General Assembly, but refused to commit to any support for military action outside the UN framework. Kojo Botsio, head of the Ghanaian delegation and one of Nkrumah's closest associates, urged Lumumba to settle his differences with Tshombe amicably; in the end, the August conference was “a letdown” compared to Lumumba's expectations, and an omen for his imminent fall from power.<sup>407</sup>

During the days of the Léopoldville conference the Special Group – a National Security Council subcommittee in charge of covert operations – was meeting somewhere in the United States to plan the removal of the Congo's premier from the political arena.<sup>408</sup> On 26 August a cable from CIA-chief Allen Dulles reached the station of the American secret service in Léopoldville, which sounds in retrospect as a death sentence:

In high quarters here it is the clear-cut conclusion that if (Lumumba) continues to hold high office, the inevitable result will at best be chaos and at worst pave the way to Communist takeover of the Congo with disastrous consequences for the prestige of the UN and for the interests of the free world generally. Consequently we conclude that his removal must be an urgent and prime objective and that under existing conditions this should be a high priority of our covert action.<sup>409</sup>

The CIA station was by September authorized to spend up to one hundred thousand dollars for the physical elimination of Lumumba.<sup>410</sup>

On 5 September, when Lumumba's poorly-organized military offensive against the rebellious provinces Kasai and Katanga had already come to a halt, Congo's President Kasavubu, who thus far had been noticed mostly for his lack of profile, announced at Radio Léopoldville that he had dismissed the premier from his offices and replaced him with the largely-unknown Joseph Ileo. Lumumba resisted this constitutionally dubious move by Kasavubu — apparently supported and promoted

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<sup>407</sup> Armah, *Peace without Power*, p. 55; cf. Mohan, “Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations,” p. 381.

<sup>408</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 189, Editorial Note.

<sup>409</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 189, Editorial Note.

<sup>410</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 22.

by the CIA<sup>411</sup> — demanding and obtaining confidence votes in both branches of parliament, and by making an emotional counter-appeal on the radio to the Congolese, in which he rejected the dismissal.<sup>412</sup> Yet the UN chief officer in the capital, André Cordier, came to Kasavubu's help, ordering the closing down of the Congo's airports to all except UN traffic, to avoid Soviet aid getting to Lumumba's army, and by sealing off Leopoldville's radio station to Lumumba.

This brought, once again, Nkrumah's loyalty to the United Nations in conflict with the support he was trying to give to his "protégé" Lumumba, whom he still considered the legitimate government of the Congo. Lumumba was outraged when he discovered that Ghanaian troops under UN command were preventing him from using the capital's radio station, while his opponents were allowed to use the stations in Brazzaville and Elisabethville. He "treated Nkrumah to the unwonted taste of his heavy and bitter invective," threatening to break off relations with Ghana.<sup>413</sup> Nkrumah, highly embarrassed, protested for his part with Hammarskjöld, saying that Ghana's armed forces were used "virtually to tie Lumumba's hands behind him while a permanent member of the Security Council [i.e. France] is allowed to whip him," warning that he would withdraw his contingent from the UN command if the situation persisted.<sup>414</sup> Yet this further threat was never concretized, which on shows that Ghana's army, in which British officers still played an important role, still possessed sufficient *esprit de corps* to resist political pressure.<sup>415</sup>

More often than not, Nkrumah's radical bark was worse than his bite, as he was in fact trying to find a conciliatory political solution to the problem which could include the United Nations and avoid unilateral gestures. Time for negotiations was running out though. The UN and the West realized that Kasavubu's move was not sufficient

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<sup>411</sup> Reporting at a National Security Council meeting about the coup, Dulles explained "that Kasavubu's move to throw out Lumumba had been undertaken without adequate planning", and "had produced consternation among his aides and advisers who had planned it for two days later", from which he concluded that "it was not easy to run a coup in the Congo." FRUS, 1958-1960 Volume XIV, Africa, Document 199, Memorandum of Discussion at the 458th Meeting of the National Security Council, 07.09.1960.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations", p. 388.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> TNA, FO 371/146779, Telegram from Cairo (Wright) to Foreign Office, 14.09.1960. Cf. Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations," p. 388.

to oust Lumumba, who could still count on a large support in parliament and among the population.<sup>416</sup> On 14 September the new Chief of Staff of the Congolese army, Colonel Mobutu, recently appointed by Ileo, resolved the dispute between the two contenders with a coup d'état which aimed to "neutralize all politicians," including the president and the parliament, and bring back order and stability until the end of the year. As a clear statement of the international allegiances of his regime, Mobutu also ordered out all Soviet and Eastern Bloc diplomats and personnel.<sup>417</sup>

On that same day, the US Ambassador Wilson Flake met with Nkrumah in Accra to ask him not to "take any precipitate action," such as the withdrawal of Ghana's troops from the UN Force, until the situation in the Congo had cleared. Nkrumah reassured him in regard to Ghana's contingent, adding that "he would support a meeting of all Congo leaders" to settle the various governmental and constitutional issues, as the Americans were suggesting, "and that he had urged Lumumba to participate in such a meeting."<sup>418</sup>

If Lumumba's lack of pragmatism was to some extent irritating for the Ghanaian president, clearly Mobutu's coup d'état brushed this disagreement off the table, as now Lumumba could put be presented as a clear victim of imperialist interference. Ghana, along with other Afro-Asian states, refused to recognize the Mobutu government — to which the Colonel had called a council of anti-Lumumbist university graduates — while he kept supporting Lumumba as the only legitimate representative of the Congolese people. Speaking at the General Assembly in New York on 23 September, Nkrumah said that he and his government had done everything to bring about a reconciliation between the various Congolese factions, especially Lumumba and Kasavubu:

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<sup>416</sup> See FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 207, Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, 10.09.1960. Clare Timberlake, evidently relieved, cabled: "Events of yesterday and today give me some hope that act one of the Congo drama has ended. [...]The trained seals are running for cover and even local clerks who worked for Lumumbavitch [sic] are being methodically arrested." Ibid., Document 217, Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, Léopoldville, 16.09.1960.

<sup>417</sup> Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations," p. 390.

<sup>418</sup> He also told the envoy "he had received many messages from Lumumba," a statement that Flake interpreted as an indication that Nkrumah was possibly getting weary of Lumumba's continued demands for help. FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 214, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 13.09.1960.



Both of them are anxious to see stability achieved in their country. Both of them agree to reconciliation. What, then, prevents them from coming together? What has led to the fake Mobutu episode? I can assure the General Assembly that but for the intrigues of the colonialists a document of reconciliation which was drafted in the presence of my Ambassador in Leopoldville and approved by both Mr. Kasavubu and Mr. Lumumba would have been signed by them. Imperialist intrigue, naked and undisguised, was desperately at work to prevent this being signed.<sup>419</sup>

Be the episode of the reconciliation document true or not — Lumumba confirmed the story, Kasavubu denied the existence of the document<sup>420</sup> — fact is that the American ambassador and the CIA did their best to torpedo a possible rapprochement between the two.

On 22 September Timberlake wrote that “evidence has steadily accumulated that Ghana, Guinea and the UAR have been putting continuous and mounting pressures on Kasavubu and Ileo to reach a compromise with Lumumba,” that “their maximum goal is reestablishment of status quo ante dismissal Lumumba.” He believed that the mastermind of this initiative was Nkrumah, “who clings to dream of Ghana–Guinea–Congo union as stepping stone to Nkrumization of Africa. If Lumumba is out of Congo, so is that part of dream.”<sup>421</sup> On 26 September, Timberlake paid a visit to both the Congolese president and the new Prime Minister Ileo telling them, in order to clear the field from any residual doubts, that he was “squarely against” Lumumba, considered him “an evil influence who would be bad for the Congo” who “created anarchy throughout country.” He noted that Kasavubu and Ileo — both stood under heavy CIA influence — “listened avidly to recommendations of [the State ] Department and [...] gave impression they were very anxious to carry them out.”<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records, 869th Plenary Meeting, 23.09.1960. [http://research.un.org - document GA\\_1960\\_NL600698](http://research.un.org - document GA_1960_NL600698) [15.06.2015].

<sup>420</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 223, Editorial Note.

<sup>421</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 226, Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, 22.09.1960.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., Document 229, Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, Léopoldville, 26.09.1960. Cf. Lemarchand, René. “The CIA in Africa: How Central? How Intelligent?” In Ray, Ellen, William Schaap, Karl Van Meter, and Louis Wolf, eds. *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa*. London: Zed Press, 1980, p. 15-16.

## Lumumba's Death and the Widening Gap

Two facts are clear at this point: (1) Ghana and the other pro-Lumumba governments were losing the battle. The restoration of the status ante — which Nkrumah stubbornly kept calling status quo — with Lumumba as prime minister and Kasavubu head of state was increasingly out of the political reality. While the former was preparing to regroup his forces in the north-eastern stronghold Stanleyville, the latter was moving close to Mobutu with the active encouragement of the CIA, which considered that a stabilization of the Congo could only result from Lumumba's, if possible physical, elimination;<sup>423</sup> (2): Ghana's and its allies' objectives were by now at odds with those of the West.

The Ghanaians were still supporting the United Nations and its Secretary-General against the Soviet Union's harsh criticism. On 17 September, Ghana's representative at the UN presented a draft resolution which endorsed Hammarskjöld's action, and urged member states to refrain from actions which might endanger the restoration of peace and security in the Congo.<sup>424</sup> However, Nkrumah could hardly earn any kudos from the United States for this, as in Washington he was seen as one of the main — if not the principal — factor which stood in the way to the neutralization of Lumumba.<sup>425</sup> Moreover, by September 1960, when the number of African members of the UN had greatly increased, the United States had decided to implement a redefinition of its relationship with Ghana, which was not “the lone African bride” anymore since Washington had found other, more “moderate” dialogue partners in sub-Saharan Africa.

At the same time the Soviet Union's offers of aid for Ghana had strengthened those around Nkrumah who were saying that Ghana did not need to rely on the West

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<sup>423</sup> Speaking with the British Foreign Secretary, Eisenhower expressed his famous wish that Lumumba may “fall into a river full of crocodiles”, see *ibid.*, Document 221, Editorial Note. Allen Dulles cabled to Léopoldville: ““We wish give every possible support in eliminating Lumumba from any possibility resuming governmental position or if he fails in Leo[poldville], setting himself in Stanleyville or elsewhere.” *Ibid.*, Document 228, Editorial Note. Cf. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 22-24; Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 210-211.

<sup>424</sup> Nwaubani, “Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis,” p. 615.

<sup>425</sup> CIA-chief Dulles declared that though “Mobutu appeared to be the effective power in the Congo for the moment [...] Lumumba was not yet disposed of and remained a grave danger”. FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 223, Editorial Note.

alone.<sup>426</sup> So the last quarter of 1960, which coincided with the last months of the Republican administration under Dwight Eisenhower, saw a marked deterioration of the relations between Ghana and the United States, made explicit by Secretary of State Herter's comments on Nkrumah's speech at the UN General Assembly on 23 September [see chapter 2.1].<sup>427</sup> Ghana, for its part, reacted to its increasing lack of capacity to influence events in the Congo with more and more violent verbal attacks in the party press against Belgium, the United States and their "imperialist manoeuvres."<sup>428</sup>

On 7 October Ghana's Ambassador Djin, along with Welbeck and Botsio, were ordered out of the country by Kasavubu, while Ghana's troops had to be moved from the capital to other regions. On 22 November the UN General Assembly, after a long debate which had been going on since September, voted to accept Kasavubu's Congolese delegation to the UN as the only legitimate, instead of Lumumba's, as Ghana claimed.<sup>429</sup> Lumumba decided to withdraw to Stanleyville, but was arrested on the way there by Mobutu's troops.

Nkrumah's anxiety over his fate, which looked bleak in jail, as well as the frustration for the return of Belgian technicians and advisers to the Congo, were at the origin of the strong attacks against Hammarskjöld and the UN, which he brought in December, either directly or through the party- and government-controlled press.<sup>430</sup> The election of John Fitzgerald Kennedy in November, on the contrary, had aroused significant hopes in Africa's nationalist circles, and both Lumumba himself and Nkrumah wrote him before he moved into the White House. The latter in particular pleaded to Kennedy to act for Lumumba's release, stressing that if anything happened

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<sup>426</sup> Nwaubani, Ebere. "Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis," 621-622.

<sup>427</sup> Cf. FRUS, 1958-1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 302 - 303.

<sup>428</sup> See TNA DO 165/23, "Ghana: Relations with the United States of America," the Acting High Commissioner in Ghana to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 01.02.1961.

<sup>429</sup> Armah, *Peace without Power*, p. 55. Ghana's diplomats refused to accept their expulsion and left only after, on 21 November, their embassy was attacked by Congolese soldiers, cf. Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations", p. 392-393.

<sup>430</sup> On 7 December Nkrumah wrote a long letter to the Secretary-General, saying that he was "greatly disturbed by continued worsening of the situation in the Congo and the extent to which everything seems to be getting out of hand", demanding the UN's intervention for the release of Lumumba, the expelling of the "Belgian saboteurs of Congolese Independence", and that otherwise there would be left only "a tragic mess in the Congo for which the United Nations cannot, I fear, escape responsibility", see TNA, FO 371/146786.

to Lumumba, America's reputation in Africa could be "irretrievably damaged."<sup>431</sup> However, for the time this appeal reached Kennedy, Lumumba was already dead, killed along with two of his collaborators, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, by Tshombe's militia with the complicity of the Belgians and the indirect support of the CIA.<sup>432</sup>

As the Crisis progressed after Lumumba's death, the United Nations at last began trying to do what Lumumba had demanded from the beginning, namely enforcing the central government's authority in Katanga and ending the secession. Nkrumah, along with the other radical African states of the "Casablanca group," followed a two-track strategy. On the one side he supported, and recognized as the Congo's legitimate government the faction led by Antoine Gizenga, Lumumba's ancient vice-premier, which until the beginning of 1962 held the Orientale province and its capital Stanleyville (today's Kisangani).<sup>433</sup> On the other side, Nkrumah consistently provided loyal support to the United Nations mission, considering that participating in the UN Force was the only way that Ghana and the other African states of the Casablanca group had left to influence the situation on the ground. For this reason in January 1961 Nkrumah resisted pressure at the Casablanca conference to withdraw Ghana's troops from the UN Force, as this would have meant leaving the field to the pro-Western African countries.<sup>434</sup>

One of the points on which he had always insisted, but which found little real consensus considering the limited technical and military possibilities of the African states (excluding South Africa), was the "Africanization" of the Crisis. Already in his

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<sup>431</sup> Rooney, David. *Kwame Nkrumah: The Political kingdom in the Third World*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1988, p. 210.

<sup>432</sup> Muehlenbeck, Betting on the Africans, p. 75-76; Gibbs, David N. "Review: Misrepresenting the Congo Crisis," *African Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 380 (July 1996): pp. 453-59, here p. 454. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/161349> [doi:10.2307/161349] [10-06.2013]; cf. Witte, Ludo de, and Ann Wright. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. London: Verso, 2002.

<sup>433</sup> Cf. James, Britain and the Congo Crisis, p. 112-119. In April 1961 a shipment of arms meant to reach Gizenga arrived at Takoradi harbour on a Soviet ship, spotted right away by the Western intelligence services. PRAAD, RG 17/1/113, Aide Memoire, 17.04.1961. After the demise of the Gizenga regime in 1962, Nkrumah sought to re-establish the connections with the Lumumbist factions, and two years later managed to sign a secret agreement with Lumumba's old party, the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC/L), with the aim to revive the old idea of the Ghana-Congo union, as "nucleus of the Union Government of Africa", in exchange of which Ghana and the CPP promised their "technical, moral and financial support" for the MNC/L. PRAAD, RG 17/1/394, 15.06.1964.

<sup>434</sup> Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo and the United Nations," p. 398.

speech of 23 September 1960 in front of the General Assembly, Nkrumah had put forward the suggestion that “the Congo crisis should be handed over to the independent African States for solution,” and that “all financial aid or technical assistance to the Republic of the Congo should [...] be channelled through the United Nations and guaranteed and supervised by a committee of the independent African States, appointed by the Security Council.”<sup>435</sup>

On 7 March 1961 Nkrumah presented then a second proposal, according to which ONUC should have taken over government affairs in the country, as a sort of UN trusteeship run by the independent African states with the aid of the Asian powers, until a solid central authority had developed — in Mohan’s words, “a sort of holding operation, while the colonial presence in the country was uprooted, the supporting western intervention eliminated, and the forces of genuine nationalism were allowed to recover, reorganise, and reassert themselves.”<sup>436</sup>

Unsurprisingly, this proposal was not taken up by the United Nations, although the Afro-Asian bloc was able to capitalize to some extent on the death of Lumumba and the ensuing worldwide outrage, obtaining for the first time a more robust mandate for ONUC, which explicitly included the option of the use of force “to prevent the occurrence of civil war.” Moreover, it seemed for some time in 1962 that Gizenga would be able to consolidate his position, after being made one of the three deputy prime ministers in the government of Cyrille Adoula. However, the failure of the first military campaigns against Katanga, and pressure from Britain and the United States to avoid a “Gizengization” of the Congo, gradually put a wedge between Adoula and the UN on one side, and Gizenga on the other, who in any case was not receiving enough support from his African and Eastern bloc friends to be militarily effective.<sup>437</sup>

The United States was now running the show in the Congo, with a more positive attitude towards African nationalism with Kennedy, but with no less anti-communist

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<sup>435</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records, 869th Plenary Meeting, 23.09.1960. <http://research.un.org> - document GA\_1960\_NL600698. In this, Nkrumah surely met the favour of the British, who were suspicious of any solution which might enable the Secretary General “to take considerable control over the whole country”, see James, *Britain and the Congo Crisis*, p. 89-91.

<sup>436</sup> Mohan, “Ghana, the Congo and the United Nations,” p. 400.

<sup>437</sup> James, *Britain and the Congo Crisis*, p. 116-117.

zeal than the precedent administration. The main aim of the Americans was to defeat both Tshombe and Gizenga while propping up Adoula's government, in the hope that the "moderates" would eventually establish a solid power in Léopoldville. In theory, Kennedy and Nkrumah held the same pro-UN line, as they confirmed during an informal visit that the latter paid to Washington in March 1961, after holding a speech at the UN General Assembly.<sup>438</sup> However, the positive personal relationship that Kennedy was able to establish with Nkrumah could only thinly veil the grudge that the latter had in fact developed against the West and the United States during the Congo Crisis. In December 1963, when the acute phase of the Crisis was over and the United Nations already envisaged the end of the mission in the Congo, Nkrumah wrote a letter to the Secretary-General U Thant, from which it is worthy to quote some passages, as they sound quite much as his "political testament" regarding the Congo Crisis:

My dear Secretary-General,

Is there any need to stress to you what independence of the Congo must mean to every African leader who regards the freedom and prosperity of the whole African continent as indivisible? But even for those who think in national, sectional or regional terms, any form of foreign control over the Congo Republic constitutes an immediate and substantial threat to their own independence.

Geographically, strategically and politically, the Congo is the most vital region of Africa. Military control of the Congo by any foreign power would give it easy access to most of the continent South of the Sahara. [...]

The strategic importance of the Congo derives from its geographical features. Foreign Powers which have concerned themselves with what they like to call "the defence of Africa" — by which they mean the defence, on the African continent, of interests which are mainly contrary to those of the African people — clearly regard the Congo as the key to the military control of Africa [...]

*The Congo represents "strategic space" to Western military and civilian experts when considering the likelihood of a war with their enemies from bases in Africa [...] There is a consensus [sic] of opinion among Western strategists that the Congo must be in hands friendly to the West. This can mean nothing else in the final analysis, but that the West must have control over the Government of the Congo. [italics added].*

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<sup>438</sup> The memorandum of conversation put to the record that the two heads of state "found themselves in agreement on three principal points on the Congo, (1) removal of Belgian military and para-military personnel, (2) neutralization of Congolese military forces and insulation of the Congo against outside influences and military supplies, and (3) freedom for the Congolese to work out their own political development. FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XX, Congo Crisis, Document 45, Memorandum of Conversation, 08.03.1961.

In fact this is precisely what the West has now achieved in the Congo. The Central Government is constrained to believe that its interests coincide with Western interests. [...] The future is ensured by seeing to it that the Congolese Army, although theoretically under the Central Government, is in fact managed principally by two Western Powers through the so-called "Binza Group."<sup>439</sup> [...]

The Congo is not only politically important because of its vast resources and strategic space in the event of a global and continental war, but because it is the buffer state between independent Africa in the North, and the territories of colonialism and white supremacy in the South. [...]

It will require not only the most pervasive system of foreign intrigue, but direct intervention to prevent the Congolese people from coming to the aid of their brothers in Angola fighting for freedom. They have made and continue to make heavy sacrifices towards this end.

It will require not only a Congo vitiated and corrupted by neo-colonialism, but a hostile Congolese Government openly siding with colonialism and white supremacy, to prevent independent Africa from using the Congo as a corridor and a base for all possible aid to the peoples of Angola and Southern Africa fighting for their liberation. [...]

I must urge you, Mr. Secretary-General [...] to set in motion consultative machinery for replacing the military forces of the United Nations by an All-African Force under the provisions of the Addis Ababa Charter, as soon as the period of the present mandate of the United Nations expires.<sup>440</sup>

This letter is a typical example for Nkrumah's general political attitude in the later years of his "political kingdom." On the one hand, it is a quite refined, critical analysis of the situation, which in the retrospect sounds more convincing than the explanations presented in the speeches of the Western leaders. On the other hand, we find a contradictory proposed action, as while Nkrumah openly announces his support for the use of Congo as a base for the armed struggle in southern Africa, at the same time he invokes the UN Secretary-General's support for an Africanized peacekeeping force in the Congo.

In any case, while it is true that many of Nkrumah's miscalculations derived from the belief "in the fundamental similarity of African countries and African problems," which "given Ghana's position as the pioneering' pilot-state' in tropical Africa [...] seemed [...] to justify the application of Ghanaian experiences and solutions to the rest of Africa,"<sup>441</sup> the responsibility for this misbelief must be shared, in equal

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<sup>439</sup> The so-called Binza Group was "an an informal group of Congolese leaders that included Mobutu, Bomboko, and Nendaka," FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XX, Congo Crisis, Document 432, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Congo, 28.10.1963

<sup>440</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/2/207, Draft letter, 14.12.1963.

<sup>441</sup> Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo and the United Nations," p.373.

measure, also by the Western leadership, which first encouraged Nkrumah's role as long as it seemed that "Ghana's experiment" could be extended to the Congo, except accusing then Ghana of interference in the Congo's internal affairs when Nkrumah refused to play the role of the "Western model boy" and decided to follow its own nationalist and panafricanist agenda.

After Lumumba's death, Nkrumah kept the channels of dialogue open and insisted in supporting a UN-centred solution to the Crisis. However, his verbal attacks against the West and the neo-colonialist manoeuvres behind the secession of Katanga became constant and more insistent. In a letter to President Kennedy, on 22 February 1961, Nkrumah wrote:

I am absolutely convinced that unless this crisis can be solved by co-operation between the African States and the Western Powers, fatal damage will be done to the relations between Africa and the United States and the Western World. [...]

I do not want to repeat in a private letter the various proposals which I have made publicly as to possible solutions of the Congo problem, but I think it might be helpful to you if I say in a private letter what are the basic feelings of Ghana and of the other African States, because this will explain to you our attitude.

Fundamentally, the distrust of the Western Powers, which has been occasioned by the Congo crisis, arises from a belief that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Powers tolerate the introduction of a new type of Colonialism into the Congo through the political actions of industrial and commercial concerns. Katanga, for example, is a State of little over a million inhabitants. It could not possibly support, out of its own resources, the armament which it is obtaining from abroad and the considerable foreign military forces which it is mobilising. It is obvious to everyone on the African continent that Tshombe's actions are controlled by the Union Miniere and that the Union Miniere is sufficiently powerful to get the support of the Belgian Government.<sup>442</sup>

The Congo Crisis had laid bare the discreet mechanics of neocolonialism, all the threads and wires that behind the scenes tie a client state to its protector. It was as if neocolonialism had been thus far an abstract concept, made concrete now by the "attempts of Belgian mining interests to maintain control of the richest part not only of the Congo but of all Africa, and the apparent casual acceptance of this move by other Western powers [...]."<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/2/25, Letter from Nkrumah to Kennedy, 22.02.1961.

<sup>443</sup> Dalton, "Colony and Metropolis," p. 564.



Until that moment, the “Ghanaian experiment” had been, after all, a win-win game for Britain and the United States on the one hand, and for Nkrumah on the other, since both took advantage of Ghana’s special position in Africa. The former could show the world that the West was able to entertain positive relations with the radical nationalists of the Third World, while discreetly taking care of their economic interests; the latter took advantage from the resulting visibility to consolidate Ghana’s prominent role as “voice” of Africa. The incapability of the Western leaders to admit that in the case of the Congo they were not just the defenders of the country’s freedom from “foreign interference,” but were in fact intervening in the Congo to defend their vested interests, contributed to the deterioration of the communication, despite the entente Nkrumah seemed to have developed with Kennedy.<sup>444</sup>

With the West gaining progressively control of the situation in the Congo, which implied thwarting Ghana’s plans for a centralized and non-aligned Congo united with Ghana and Guinea, Nkrumah realized though that the “Ghana experiment” was part of a larger design in which the African countries, formally independent but disunited and impoverished, would remain part of the sphere of influence of their former colonial masters and of the United States, the capitalist leading power.

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<sup>444</sup> In a message dated 22 August 1960, Macmillan responded to Nkrumah’s claim that “the powers who are associated in N.A.T.O. are unable to take an impartial view of events in the Congo because of their alliance with Belgium”, denying that the NATO powers had any interest in the control of the former Belgian bases in the Congo, TNA FO 371/146805, Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Accra, 22.08.1960. As a matter of fact, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States armed forces considered it “essential that the airfield at Kitona, and the port of Banana, and the Kamina base complex, Republic of Congo, remain in friendly hands, and further, that these facilities be denied to the military forces of the Soviet Bloc.” FRUS, 1958–1960 Volume XIV, Africa, Document 181, Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Twining) to Secretary of Defense Gates, 18.08.1960. In December 1961, Secretary of State Dean Rusk confirmed in a telephone conversation with president Kennedy that in Paris, Brussels and London “the Congo was the most pressing item”, and had been heatedly debated inside the North Atlantic Council, FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XX, Congo Crisis, Document 158, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, 13.12.1961.

## Chapter II: The United States and Ghana

### 2.1 The Eisenhower Administration, Ghana, and the Cold War

While in the early 1950s the British were busy in the Gold Coast with their state-building experiment, Africa south of the Sahara was largely out of the radar screens of both the United States and the Soviet Union. The crucial areas in the Cold War were those with borders to the communist world, i.e. Europe, the Middle East and East Asia. After the death of Stalin and the end of the Korean war the two superpowers began to devote more attention to the developing world in general, yet they mostly focussed on the Asian continent rather than Africa, for the most part still colonial territory.<sup>445</sup> The United States however held a consulate in Accra since 1942, and was therefore able to follow the political developments that were taking place in the Gold Coast since 1948.<sup>446</sup>

As the prospect of independence became more concrete, the Ghanaians themselves began reaching out to the United States, hoping to get technical assistance, development aid and private investments, especially for the Volta River hydroelectric scheme [see chapter 2.2]. In 1952 the prime minister of the Gold Coast met with the American consul. The following passage from the latter's report reflects well the Ghanaians' self-consciousness in regard to their state-building experience:

Nkrumah observed that the "experiment in the Gold Coast" is of fundamental importance to the rest of Africa, since, in his opinion, its outcome will determine to a considerable extent the progress which may be made in other colonial areas. In addition, it will influence the attitude of the United States toward the political aspirations of other dependent areas.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Rusca, Maria. "LA COOPERAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE ALLO SVILUPPO E IL RUOLO DELL'ITALIA: PREMESSE STORICHE E PRIMO DECENNIO (1960 - 1970)." Ph.D., Università degli Studi di Roma Tre, p. 16-17. <http://dspace-roma3.casur.it/handle/2307/454> [23.01.2016]. Cf. Bradley, Mark Philip. "Decolonization, the Global South, and the Cold War, 1919–1962." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 464–85. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.

<sup>446</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1952–1954, Volume XI, Part 1, Africa and South Asia, Document 104, The Consul at Accra (Cole) to the Department of State Accra, 04.02.1952.

<sup>447</sup> FRUS, 1952–1954, Volume XI, Part 1, Africa and South Asia, Document 112, The Consul at Accra (Cole) to the Department of State Accra, 25.08.1952.

Despite the marginality of sub-Saharan Africa in the overall foreign policy strategy of the United States, this kind of statements were not entirely lost on the State Department, and so in September 1953 the consulate in Accra was upgraded to consulate general, as they reckoned that the Gold Coast was “a bellwether among the African colonies”:

It is therefore of far-reaching importance to the U.S. that the nationalist movement be directed into constructive rather than destructive channels. The present Gold Coast Prime Minister is American-educated and entertains friendly feelings for the United States. There is every indication that he will look to the United States for guidance and assistance in getting an autonomous government firmly established. Appropriate United States representation at Accra is a very inexpensive way to assure close future relations with the Gold Coast Government and in orienting other new African states towards western democratic ideals and practices. The future importance of this area to the U.S. cannot be overestimated.<sup>448</sup>

The value of the “Ghana experiment”, as seen from Washington, thus lay especially in its capacity to keep the “African flock” inside the Western pen.<sup>449</sup> In 1954 the consul in Accra, along with his public affairs officer and the information officer, was commended by the State Department for settling a dispute between the representative in West Africa of the US-led International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and Prime Minister Nkrumah. The rapprochement between the two led to the denunciation in the party press of communist infiltration in the Gold Coast, and to the purge of party and union members close to the Soviet-backed World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Washington saluted these developments as “of the utmost importance to the Free World.”<sup>450</sup> Though at that time there were not many American funds available for the development of sub-Saharan Africa — the general reckoning was that this responsibility rested on the colonial powers — the State Department was looking for ways to foster the relations with this nascent

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<sup>448</sup> FRUS, 1952–1954, Volume XI, Part 1, Africa and South Asia, Document 118, Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Jernegan) to the Under Secretary of State for Administration (Lourie) 25.06.1953.

<sup>449</sup> In Muehlenbeck words: “Due to his personal prestige and popularity, Washington and Moscow both saw Nkrumah as a potential mouthpiece to spread their ideology throughout the continent, and each therefore took great effort to court the Ghanaian leader.” Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 18.

<sup>450</sup> FRUS, 1952–1954 Volume XI, Part 1, Africa and South Asia, Document 119, Report by the Vice Consul at Accra (Fleming), 30.10.1953.

nation.<sup>451</sup> From the economic point view, as an internal memorandum considered in 1956, America's foremost economic concern was "whether this newly emerging self-governing territory will be able to plan and finance a rate of social and economic development which will insure sound and orderly progress and continued orientation to the West."<sup>452</sup> The State Department criticized the Ghana government's ambitious development strategy, as they feared that an unsustainable economic policy might lead to financial and political instability, which could favour the conditions for a communist takeover.

## **Washington, London, and Beijing**

Considering the sluggishness still dominating the field of development cooperation for Africa in that period, and the limited leverage that could thus be exerted by economic means, in the mid-1950s State Department officials began advocating a more anti-colonial course by the United States at the political level, so as to undermine the Soviet Union's effort to depict itself as the true friend of the colonial peoples, while the United States too often appeared as an ally of the colonial powers. The Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East, Asia, and Africa, deplored that the United States was "constantly subject to the dilemma of sympathizing with our European allies on the one hand, and of feeling an emotional opposition to colonialism on the other. Right or wrong, this schizophrenia makes for a peculiar combination of uncertainty, guilt complex, and emotionalism on our part when we consider our role in this part of Africa." He demanded an independent US policy, more "identifiably American":

To some extent, it would be a matter of creating policy where none has ever existed. It also would mean shedding outworn views of what Africa is and can be. It would require reviewing our present relationships with both the colonial powers and the dependent peoples. And it would

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<sup>451</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 8, Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Secretary of State, 28.12.1955.

<sup>452</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 16, Memorandum From the Officer in Charge of Southern Africa Economic Affairs (Longanecker) to the Director of the Office of Southern Africa Affairs (Hadsel), 31.10.1956.

mean bringing order into policies which hitherto have been adopted in a fit of absentmindedness.  
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Also the intelligence agencies knew that storms were gathering in Africa. Soon America would be confronted with demands for support by both sides in the colonial conflicts, and put before difficult decisions in regard to the racial issues in Southern Africa.<sup>454</sup> However, when the leaders of the United States and the United Kingdom met in Bermuda in March 1957, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles seemed to be especially eager to avoid the impression with the British that the United States was trying to put pressure on Europe to decolonize as fast as possible. He even reminded, quoting Eisenhower, that the United States “hoped that in some cases these countries would not want to become independent and would retain their relationships with the mother countries,” out of fear that “independence might be followed by a Communist takeover.”<sup>455</sup>

The British seemed appreciative, and said that if America and Britain avoided to seem “to be at cross purposes as perhaps had been the case in the Middle East,” it would be possible to keep “the Communists out of Africa.”<sup>456</sup> To consider African nationalists such as Nkrumah as potential allies in the struggle against the Soviet Union was clearly not a priority on the agenda of the Eisenhower administration yet, although prominent figures such as Vice-President Richard Nixon and Under Secretary Christian Herter constantly stressed the danger of communism for Africa’s stability.<sup>457</sup> For the time being, in Washington it was considered that the colonial powers, especially Britain and France, were capable of keeping their dependencies on the right path, without the need for America to intervene directly in the decolonization process.

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<sup>453</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 7, Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Secretary of State, Washington, August 12, 1955.

<sup>454</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 14, National Intelligence Estimate, 14.08.1956.

<sup>455</sup> He almost apologized for the fact that some groups in the United States were “advocating the principle of independence and pressing for its immediate application,” which would in his opinion “cause unnecessary activity among some of the peoples of Africa and might raise false hopes among them.” Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 18, Memorandum of a Conversation, Mid-Ocean Club Conference Room, Bermuda, 23.03.1957, 10:30 a.m. The reference here is obviously to the Suez Crisis of 1956.

<sup>457</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 23, Memorandum of Discussion at the 335th Meeting of the National Security Council, 22.08.1957.

However, the British were not always keen to follow the United States in its anti-communist course, as the case of the Gold Coast shows. At the beginning of 1957 the State Department was in full alarm in regard to what was perceived as “a real Soviet diplomatic offensive in Africa,” in view of the offers for diplomatic exchange and aid made by the Russians to various African countries.<sup>458</sup> In the Gold Coast, speeding towards independence, to Washington’s dismay word was on the street that the government intended to invite the Soviet Union as well as communist China to the independence celebrations, and maybe even exchange diplomatic representations.<sup>459</sup> The United States pressured London to try to influence the Gold Coast to withdraw the invitation that had gone out to the People’s Republic of China, and to invite instead the Republic of China (Taiwan), but the British refused. The Foreign Office said they considered the US request “odd,” and added that if the Gold Coast had invited the Chinese communists it was because they had used as basis for their list of invitees the countries with which the United Kingdom entertained diplomatic relations, among which was the government in Beijing.<sup>460</sup>

London, in fact, was happy that the Gold Coast had accepted to use their diplomatic list to extend the invitations, because this implied that countries which had broken relations with the United Kingdom after the Suez expedition, especially Egypt and Syria, would not attend; they feared that if they pushed for Taiwan to be invited, Nkrumah would invite Egypt too, and therefore they preferred let things rest. Nkrumah for his part, when the American consul tried to bring pressure directly upon him to invite also the Chinese nationalists, sought refuge in the fact that, officially, the country’s foreign policy was still decided in Whitehall, kicking the ball back in

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<sup>458</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 123, Instruction From the Department of State to the Consulate General at Accra, 20.02.1956.

<sup>459</sup> “Russia’s primary objective in establishing diplomatic and consular offices in Africa is to undermine the fledgling political institutions of countries just emerged from colonial status to independence. The principal Soviet tool used to bring about the communist penetration of these countries and surrounding areas would be the offers of economic aid and technical assistance, with significant political strings attached. Another, most effective tool would be the organization and direction of cadres of Africans, already trained in Communist schools abroad, to proselytize and win over to communism the tribal peoples of the West African hinterland.” Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 124, Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Counselor of the British Embassy (de la Mare) and the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), Department of State, 06.02.1957.

London's corner. So in the end, the American delegation led by Nixon had to tolerate the presence of the envoy of Beijing at Ghana's independence celebration, while an invitation to Taipei was never issued.<sup>461</sup> This circumstance probably proved rather odd to the US State Department. While they had reckoned with the possibility of conflicts between dependent territories and their mother countries, and resolved that in those cases they would align with the Europeans, they had probably not expected alliances between colonies and metropolises against the United States.<sup>462</sup>

### **The Volta Scheme and the Search for American Aid**

In the months following independence, Ghana declared it would follow a policy of non-alignment, yet avoided frictions with the Western bloc, and exchanged ambassadors only with London, Paris, Washington, Ottawa, Monrovia and Delhi — also because of lack of adequate diplomatic personnel.<sup>463</sup> Nevertheless, Nkrumah had already told Nixon that “Ghana might find it necessary to establish some kind of representation with the Soviet bloc,” thus the issue kept looming large.<sup>464</sup> What mattered most for Ghana in the relations with the industrialized countries, from the West but also from the East, was the matter of development, and the assistance that Ghana might receive for its own advancement; for its part, the Soviet Union was especially set to make new friends in Africa and in Asia, while the United States tried to counter these efforts and contain Moscow's advancement.

In November 1957, Nkrumah summoned the diplomatic corps represented in Accra and told them that the “USSR is pressuring through [the] Ghana High Commissioner in London” for the establishing of diplomatic relations, and “that he saw little way to hold USSR off much longer.” Privately, Nkrumah told the American ambassador that “he would not care what consequences might follow a rebuff to [the]

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<sup>461</sup> FRUS XVIII, Africa, Document 128, Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations (Hill) to the Vice President, 18.02.1957. Cf. FRUS, *ibid.*, doc. 125.

<sup>462</sup> Cf. FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 7, Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Secretary of State, Washington, August 12, 1955.

<sup>463</sup> Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 444-445.

<sup>464</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 129, Memorandum of a Conversation, 04.03.1957

USSR if he could get economic development started.” This likewise implied though that if aid from the West was not forthcoming, it would be difficult for him to resist the pressures of those who were saying that Ghana, as non-aligned country, should take advantage of the relations with both worlds.<sup>465</sup> What lay behind this ‘threat’ was surely the intent to put pressure upon the Western countries in regard to development assistance, which in the case of the United States meant in the first place the Volta River Project, Ghana’s pivotal development scheme, for which it was trying to obtain America’s interest, since the British had pulled out as main investors.

Ambassador Flake telegraphed to Washington that by showing interest in “reasonable economic projects” there was still the hope that the diplomatic exchange between Moscow and Accra could be avoided; yet the State Department was in the first place worried to keep the profile of the Volta Project negotiations low for financial reasons, and recommended not to mention it, although this was the development initiative Nkrumah most cared for.<sup>466</sup> In June 1957, the United States and Ghana signed a technical cooperation agreement, and \$700,000 were committed for agricultural and community development programs. However, considering that in the same year the United States granted aid to Morocco for \$20 million, and to Tunisia for \$5 million, it is clear that Nkrumah must have felt that there was still a margin of improvement in this respect.<sup>467</sup>

Nkrumah knew that because of Ghana’s relatively high per-capita income, due to the high cocoa price in those years, and the country’s lack of strategic importance, they could not be placed on top of the priority list for Western development funds; he hoped though that thanks to Ghana’s special political value as pioneer of African decolonization and standard-bearer of pan-Africanism they could expect some interest in regard to the Volta scheme. For their part, Eisenhower and Dulles were looking for an authoritative, pro-Western figure which might keep sub-Saharan Africa investment-friendly and anti-communist. In July 1958, following up on an

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<sup>465</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 132, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 06.11.1957.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 19, Report by the Vice President, 05.04.1957.



invitation by President Eisenhower, Nkrumah thus toured Canada and the United States, and it seemed for a while that America and the West had found an African nationalist “by which Communism and Nasserism might be defeated or to some extent off-set.”<sup>468</sup>

Between 23 July and 2 August Nkrumah met twice with President Eisenhower, discussed Middle East issues with the secretary of state, Ghana’s economic policy with Under Secretary Herter, addressed the Senate and the House of Representatives. After official meetings in Washington he visited Philadelphia, New York (where he was greeted as a hero in Harlem), and Chicago.<sup>469</sup> One of the things that was more frequently noted about Nkrumah, and which reinforced the idea that he was a pragmatist, was that, despite his ties to the Arab states of North Africa, Ghana was establishing close relations with Israel, as he himself confirmed during a conversation with Eisenhower.<sup>470</sup> So while the US administration was falling out with Egypt’s President Nasser, in 1958 they nurtured the hope that Nkrumah would put his charisma and oratorical skills at the service of the Western cause, helping to dam the tide of left-leaning nationalism that they saw as a Trojan Horse for the expansion of Soviet communism in the Third World.<sup>471</sup>

The problem was that the relationship to Ghana was tied, as in the case of Egypt, to a costly hydroelectric project, the Volta Scheme, which in some estimates was supposed to cost \$500 million, in others up to \$1 billion, and which Ghana could not possibly hope to bring to conclusion without vigorous financial and political backing on the part of the United States government. Eisenhower though was not ready for a commitment of public money on that scale in Africa. So the idea was born to refer Nkrumah to the Kaiser Corporation, one of the leading North American aluminium concern, possibly interested in the dam for aluminium production.<sup>472</sup> In this way, three birds would be killed with one stone: promoting United States economic

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<sup>468</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/120, To Credit File, Call by Raymond F. Talbert, 29.07.1958.

<sup>469</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 293, Editorial Note.

<sup>470</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 295, Memorandum of Conversation, 24.07.1958.

<sup>471</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 13-24.

<sup>472</sup> FRUS, *ibid.*, Document 295, Memorandum of Conversation, 24.07.1958.

interests, keeping Africa tied to the West, and showcasing Ghana as a “success story” of cooperation between capitalist enterprise and non-aligned governments.

### **America and the Quest for the Moderate African Nationalist**

In 1959 Ghanaian-American relations were dominated by the negotiations that took place between the government in Accra, the North American multinational corporations and the World Bank, whose financial support and technical expertise was needed as well. The bond between the two countries seemed to have grown rather solid though, and when on 14 January the Soviet Union eventually managed to open its embassy in Accra, the event did not raise much concern in Washington.<sup>473</sup> Other countries seemed at the time to be more at risk of falling prey of Soviet wiles, such as Guinea. In 1958 it had become independent against the French will, upsetting De Gaulle to such an extent, that the French had left the country without any technical or economic means to sustain itself, thus forcing it to accept help from the socialist countries.

The Guinean crisis was the typical case in which the United States found itself “in the middle of a controversy between an emerging African state and a European power with each side looking to us to influence the other.”<sup>474</sup> Although Guinea’s head of state, Sékou Touré, visited the United States in December 1958, professing his neutrality in the Cold War, for some time the Eisenhower administration watched with serious concern the links Guinea was building with the Soviet Union, and being unable to influence either the French or the Guineans, attempted to exert influence on the West African country through regional leaders considered more moderate, such as Nkrumah.<sup>475</sup>

In 1959 and 1960 the United States tried to elaborate an organic strategy for Africa, at the level of the National Security Council (NSC) and of NATO, where on

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<sup>473</sup> Quite surprisingly, and perhaps for this reason, there is for the time being no document on Ghana for 1959 in the collection *Foreign Relations of the United States*.

<sup>474</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 10, Report by the Operations Coordinating Board, 14.01.1959.

<sup>475</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 301, 22.09.1960.

20 March the Committee on Africa presented for discussion a report titled “Communist Penetration in Africa.”<sup>476</sup> Figures such as the United States representative at the UN Trusteeship Council, Philip Mason Sears, recommended to increase the political and diplomatic attention for the nationalist leadership of the future African states, and the US ambassador to the UN suggested that the Secretary of State “designate a special representative who would first visit the colonial offices and then travel throughout Africa, especially to the troubled areas,” because while the “US has over the years exerted quiet, but effective pressure on colonial powers [...] we now need something more visible that the masses in Africa would regard as friendly.”<sup>477</sup>

Dulles though was far from being convinced that America should really take a proactive position in the decolonization process. He noted that Africa, which he considered “the hinterland of Western Europe,” was “caught up in the worldwide movement for premature independence,” and subject to various ideological pressures, such as Egypt’s brand of nationalism, Islam, pan-Africanism and Soviet communism, which it didn’t have the maturity to manage.<sup>478</sup>

The debate which took place inside the NSC on 14 January 1960 is particularly indicative of this patronizing approach.<sup>479</sup> A draft of a NSC report had been approved by the majority of the Planning Board, in which “three co-equal objectives” for US policy in Africa were mentioned: (1) “maintenance of the Free World orientation of the area,” (2) “orderly economic development and political progress towards self-determination”, and (3) “access to such military rights and facilities and strategic resources as may be required.” The Treasury however objected that the first should have priority in relation to the other two, and the president supported this view, as “he assumed that if we were unable to achieve our objective of maintaining the Free

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<sup>476</sup> North Atlantic Council, “Communist Penetration In Africa”, Report by the Committee on Africa, 20.03.1959, archives.nato.int [18.05.2015].

<sup>477</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 11, Memorandum From the Representative at the Trusteeship Council (Sears) to the Representative at the United Nations (Lodge), 29.01.1959.

<sup>478</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960 Volume XIV, Africa, Document 13, Editorial Note.

<sup>479</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 21, Memorandum of Discussion at the 432d Meeting of the National Security Council, 14.01.1960.

World orientation of the area and denying it to Communism, we would not want to proceed with our other objectives”.

Deputy Secretary of Defense James Douglas made a timid attempt to stem against the current, saying that he “believed that in the Cameroons, for example, the U.S. might want to promote economic development and political progress even if Communism did not appear there,” but Eisenhower rebuffed the objection, declaring that “if the countries of this area oriented themselves toward Moscow, we would not wish to undertake programs for their orderly economic development and political progress.”<sup>480</sup> Secretary of State Dulles added that in any case he “thought the chances of achieving orderly economic development and political progress towards self-determination by the countries of the area were just about nil,” and the president confirmed that when “the King of Morocco had told him that U.S. policy should be to help the countries of Africa to become independent and then assist in their development,” he “had characterized this position as putting the cart before the horse.”

This kind of statements exemplify the diffuse pessimism and mistrust towards African decolonization that dominated in part of the Eisenhower administration. They are relevant to understand why the relations between the United States and Ghana deteriorated as sharply as they did over the course of 1960. For Nkrumah the liberation of Africa from colonial domination and foreign influence was a precondition for the continent to achieve progress and development — the sooner the end of colonialism, the better for the dominated peoples. He considered the achievement of political self-determination as the first step in the emancipation from poverty, ignorance and disease, which he saw as legacies of the imperialistic oppression.<sup>481</sup> The distance from the opinion of men like Nixon, who considered that “some of the peoples of Africa have been out of the trees for only about fifty years,”

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> Nkrumah, Kwame. *Towards Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle against World Imperialism*. London: Heinemann, 1962.

and should therefore rather stay under colonial tutelage for a few decades more, was abysmal.<sup>482</sup>

Nevertheless, as long as Nkrumah kept distance to the Soviet Union and avoided criticizing the West in public too sharply the United States tolerated his anti-colonial stand: after all, Ghana was considered “the most viable nation in Africa”, with as much as “50 per cent chance for an orderly development.” Nkrumah, with his authoritarian tendencies, might still have turned out to be one of the “strong men of Africa” which the United States might want to keep “on our side.”<sup>483</sup> It is possible to say that until 1959 the Eisenhower administration, although they did not took delight in the drive for speeding up the decolonization process that had come from the All-African Peoples’ Conference in Accra in December 1958 among what they considered “immature and unsophisticated peoples,” still considered Nkrumah an ally, albeit not totally reliable, in this “second scramble for Africa” that was taking place.<sup>484</sup>

However, considering the pace at which America’s relations with some of Nkrumah’s closest partners in the Non-Aligned Movement, like Nasser and Sukarno, were deteriorating, and that as of the entrance of the *barbudos* in Havana in January 1959 the Eisenhower administration began spotting ‘Castros’ everywhere Third-World nationalists tried to challenge the status quo, it was only a matter of time before the point of rupture between the United States and Ghana would be reached too.<sup>485</sup> The moment came when in July 1960 Ghana became a republic and began considering that its status as a non-aligned country allowed it to be equidistant from the two blocs, entertaining close relations with both, and to criticize the United States without equally criticizing the Soviet bloc. This ran against the Eisenhower

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<sup>482</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 21.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Cf. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 14-16.

administration's goal number one for Africa — keeping the reds out — and ought therefore to be chastised.<sup>486</sup>

## **The United States and Ghana's Lurch to the Left**

In the course of 1960, as we have seen Ghana pursued what the British High Commissioner in Accra labelled as a “lurch to the left.”<sup>487</sup> Although Ghana remained member of the Commonwealth and was negotiating with the United States the largest single foreign investment in Africa's history, there was increasingly consensus in the CPP that the moment had come to conclude the country's independence by working on the economic independence side, ending the virtual monopoly in trade and investment that especially the United Kingdom had so far virtually enjoyed in the country.<sup>488</sup> As a non-aligned country aspiring to a mixed, socialist-based economy, Ghana would finally enjoy the benefits of entertaining friendly relations with both camps in the Cold War — which by the way Nkrumah hoped would soon be ended, thanks to the mediation of the neutralist nations.

So a rising tide of delegation exchanges, visits, contacts began, which in 1960 culminated at first in the visits of three Ghanaian ministers to the Soviet Union, where they received a VIP-treatment, and then in the signing of a number of agreements between Ghana and the USSR on trade, economic, cultural and technical cooperation, which included a long-term credit of 160 million roubles by the Soviet Union.<sup>489</sup> Ghana's shift to the left corresponded by a coincidence also with the moment in which Ghana's aims and those of the West in regard to the Congo and the

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<sup>486</sup> Of course, this policy line was not undisputed inside the administration. The Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Joseph Satterthwaite, for example, did not believe “that we can any longer avoid a forthright position that we are genuinely determined to help the peoples of Africa to cope with their problems and secure their newly won independence on solid economic foundations. Our posture must give Africans the impression that the United States regards Africa as an important region in world affairs in its own right and not just as an adjunct in the Cold War.” FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 24, Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Satterthwaite) to the Under Secretary of State (Dillon), 30.03.1960.

<sup>487</sup> Cf. chapter 1.2.

<sup>488</sup> TNA, FO 371/146801, “Ghana: Relations with the Soviet Union,” United Kingdom High Commissioner in Ghana to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 18.08 [08.07] 1960.

<sup>489</sup> Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 162-172.

dramatic crisis that was taking place there began to diverge. However, it was not until September 1960 that the rupture became explicit.

Many world leaders were in New York to address the General Assembly, and so did Eisenhower, Nkrumah, and Khrushchev. The president of the United States made his speech during the morning session of 22 September, in which he spoke, as first point, of Africa and the Congo, saying that “nowhere is the challenge to the international community and to peace and orderly progress more evident than in Africa,” and proposing a five-point plan for Africa, which in his view “could go far to assure the African countries the clear chance at the freedom, domestic tranquillity and progress they deserve.”<sup>490</sup> It was a pragmatic, moderate speech, which avoided criticizing colonialism and expressed support for the United Nations’ role.

On the afternoon of that same day Eisenhower saw Ghana’s head of state for an informal exchange at his suite at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Reading the minutes of the meeting that took place between the two, one would have expected that despite all differences Ghana and the United States still basically shared the same broad view of what was happening in Africa. According to the memorandum of conversation drafted by Assistant Secretary of State Satterwaithe, Eisenhower requested Nkrumah’s views on the Congo issue, and both reaffirmed their support for a UN-centred solution of the crisis, expressing approval for Hammarskjöld.<sup>491</sup> However, other sources report that the US president “repeatedly deflected Nkrumah’s attempts to discuss the Congo,” and that “the Ghanaian president left the meeting upset that Eisenhower did not share his belief in the urgency of the situation in the Congo.”<sup>492</sup>

In any event, Nkrumah’s speech at the United Nations, scheduled for the next day, would show beyond doubt the distance that had grown between Ghana and the United States. Nkrumah’s incipit was emotional:

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<sup>490</sup> The five points were: “non-interference in the African countries’ internal affairs; help in assuring their security without wasteful and dangerous competition in armaments; emergency aid to the Congo; international assistance in shaping long-term African development programmes; United Nations aid for education.” Eisenhower also said that the US was prepared to contribute “substantially” to the UN special fund proposed by Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld. United Nations General Assembly, Official Records, 867th Plenary Meeting, 22.09.1960. [http://research.un.org - document GA\\_1960\\_NL600697](http://research.un.org - document GA_1960_NL600697) [15.06.2015].

<sup>491</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 301, Memorandum of Conversation, 22.09.1960.

<sup>492</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 24.

For years and years, Africa has been the foot-stool of colonialism and imperialism, exploitation and degradation. From the North to the South, from the East to the West, her sons languished in the chains of slavery and humiliation, and Africa's exploiters and self-appointed controllers of her destiny strode across our land with incredible inhumanity — without mercy, without shame, and without honour. But those days are gone, and gone forever, and now I, an African, stand before the General Assembly of the United Nations and speak with the voice of peace and freedom, proclaiming to the world the dawn of a new era.<sup>493</sup>

He strongly condemned colonialism and imperialism, declaring that “possession of colonies is now quite incompatible with membership in the United Nations,” attacking especially Belgium for its interference in the internal affairs of the Congo, and making a plea for the “Africanization” of the Congo crisis by the withdrawal of all non-African troops. He criticized the UN for failing to back Lumumba’s government, and the NATO powers for Portugal’s colonial policy and the French atomic tests in the Sahara. Nevertheless, Ghana’s head of state expressed the hope that Africa would stay out of the Cold War, as well as his personal appreciation for how the Secretary General had handled his “most difficult task” in the Congo crisis.

So, all in all, it was a strongly anti-colonial, anti-imperialist speech, surely idealistic and maybe even naive, which here and there got a dig at the United States and its allies; however, the Soviet Union is not mentioned once in the speech, and the general tone, after all, can be described as constructive if looked at without ideological prejudice.<sup>494</sup> Nevertheless, Secretary of State Herter, without even listening to the entire speech, declared to the press that by his address Nkrumah had “marked himself as very definitely leaning toward the Soviet bloc,” opening a diplomatic incident on the matter. His Assistant complained with Ghana’s foreign minister that Nkrumah had listened to Khrushchev’s speech, which followed immediately upon his own, but not to Eisenhower’s on the previous day, and that “it was difficult to find a word in the speech showing any understanding of the position of the West in the East-West conflict”; he said that “the content of the Nkrumah and Khrushchev speeches and the display attached to the reception by the eastern bloc

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<sup>493</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Official Records, 869th Plenary Meeting, 23.09.1960. [http://research.un.org - document GA\\_1960\\_NL600698](http://research.un.org - document GA_1960_NL600698) [15.06.2015].

<sup>494</sup> In fact, it can even be said that it “contained little that was new” to those acquainted with Nkrumah’s oratorical performances, Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 165.



delegates of the Nkrumah speech gave us every reason to believe there had been collusion between the two.”<sup>495</sup> It was apparently not so much the content of the speech, as the display of *entente cordiale* between Nkrumah and the Soviet leadership that bothered the US government.

Back in Accra, Nkrumah received quite a severe reprimand also by the American ambassador — it would not be the last one — who first confronted him directly on the support he was giving to Lumumba, and then got straight to the most sensitive point, the compatibility of a purportedly Soviet-friendly foreign policy with the United States backing of the Volta Scheme:

I thought the President had to declare himself. If he and his supporters did not want private enterprise to undertake the Volta or some other project for the purpose of making a profit he should say so at this time and the American companies would go elsewhere; but if the President wanted the consortium to proceed under conditions mutually agreed upon, then it was the President’s responsibility to stop some of his supporters from their campaign of hate against American and other “economic imperialists.” [...] I said that quite frankly I was getting a bit weary of all the double talk among some of his supporters who think they can have things both ways.<sup>496</sup>

Nkrumah tended to be malleable when confronted personally, and he solemnly reaffirmed to the ambassador his desire to keep great power politics out of Ghana, and “not permit Ghana being used as cockpit to fight cold war.”<sup>497</sup>

On 9 October, Nkrumah uttered a radio speech in which he stated that Ghana sought a mixed, socialist economy based on “four streams,” one of which was the private, foreign-capital based enterprise. After Edgar Kaiser, head of Kaiser Corporation, and his leading negotiator Chad Calhoun, both brought pressure upon Nkrumah, Ambassador Flake, who knew that a break-up with the West would have played into the hands of the Soviets, tried to reassure Washington, stating that he could “detect no fundamental desire on Nkrumah’s part to desert the West for the

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<sup>495</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 302, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Satterthwaite) and the Ghanaian Representative at the United Nations (Quaison-Sackey), 24.09.1960

<sup>496</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 303, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 07.10.1960.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

East or even to become more friendly towards [the] USSR than towards [the] US”.<sup>498</sup> Nevertheless by October Eisenhower and Herter though, who a few months before had encouraged Nkrumah’s role in the Congo Crisis, had decided that

by actions as well as words Nkrumah seemed determined [to] abet [the] Soviet cause. Under these circumstances and given adverse reaction many other African states to his performance [at the UN] we do not wish take action to encourage Nkrumah’s role in Africa unless and until he shows greater signs of stability and that his actions are not furthering Soviet objectives in such matters as Congo and UN machinery.<sup>499</sup>

It is possible to say that up to a certain point, the Eisenhower administration had recognized the value of a successful “Ghanaian experiment” for the general Western strategy in Africa, and tried to involve Nkrumah in its plans. However, a rigid anti-communist policy line for the Third World became dominant in the late 1950s, while at the same time Ghana was experimenting with a more maverick version of its non-alignment. Relations hence soured. The strong nexus between America and Ghana in this phase remained the private aluminium interests, which had scented the chance of an exceptional business in the shade of the government’s Third-World policy, and pushed for a reconciliation.<sup>500</sup> Politically, the hot potato was passed on to the new president elected, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

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<sup>498</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 305, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 25.10.1960.

<sup>499</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 304, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 13.10.1960. Cf. FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 99, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 28.04.1960. There was surely also a personal component in the hostility between the United States and Ghana. Speaking e.g. with India’s prime minister Nehru in September, Eisenhower called Nkrumah “glib and facile,” s. FRUS, 1958–1960 Volume XV, South and Southeast Asia, Document 267, Memorandum of a Conference With the President, New York, 26.09.1960.

<sup>500</sup> Speaking before parliament in January 1961, Nkrumah “paid a warm tribute to Edgar Kaiser, saying that from 1958 onwards he had shown enthusiasm and understanding, ‘second only to our own,’ both of the Project and of the many problems involved in bringing it to life,” Moxon, James. *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake. The Story of Ghana’s Akosombo Dam*. New York: Praeger, 1969, p. 108.

## 2.2 The Volta River Project

No single economic initiative is so closely tied to the name of Ghana's first president as the Volta River Project (in the following, VRP). It is an integrated industrial complex, made of the dam on the river Volta in Akosombo, the annexed power plant, and an aluminium smelter close to the harbour in Tema, where the raw mineral is imported and the finished aluminium is then exported. It has been referred to as "Nkrumah's obsession"; to be sure, without the relentless pressure of Nkrumah's government, this remarkable example of engineering and entrepreneurial work, which produced what for a long time was "the greatest man-made lake in the world," would have never come to conclusion as it did, in 1966, after ten years of negotiations and four years of actual construction work.<sup>501</sup>

It was at the time the largest single initiative of economic cooperation between the Western, capitalist nations and Africa, and exemplifies many of the contradictions borne by the relationship between these two worlds. Looking from today's perspective at the long and difficult genesis of the Project, one cannot fail, in fact, to see, with some surprise perhaps, the extent to which the VRP, even if it mostly was paid for by Ghanaian taxpayers and built by Ghanaian labourers, was in the end the result of the initiative of North Americans and Europeans, while few Ghanaians and Africans, apart from Nkrumah and his top negotiators, Komla Gbedemah and Immanuel Ayeh-Kumi, took an leading role in it.<sup>502</sup> Thus it should come as no surprise that this fact would in the end carry some consequences for the profitability of the Project for the Ghanaian people as opposed to the involved Western private companies.

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<sup>501</sup> NB, the smelter entered production only in 1967.

<sup>502</sup> A "purely African" study circle drafted in fact a pamphlet called "Power from the Volta," but it was never publicized and failed to draw attention, Moxon, *Man's Greatest Lake*, p. 58.

## Early History of the VRP

The first recollection of the history of the VRP and the consequent birth of an aluminium industry in Ghana was that of an Englishman, James Moxon; it was published three years after the inauguration of the Akosombo dam.<sup>503</sup> The book follows the story of the VRP from the outset until, in the subsequent editions, the early 1980s. Moxon, who participated in it as public relations officer, retraces the first known encounters between man and the river Volta, which originates from the confluence of three different streams — the White, the Black and the Red Volta — and drains then in the Gulf of Guinea about a hundred kilometres west of Accra, having passed the Akosombo barrage and Lake Volta.<sup>504</sup>

Pioneer of the idea to exploit the river for the production of electricity for mining purpose was also an Englishman, Albert Kitson. After his arrival in the Gold Coast in 1913, this enterprising geologist set about to opening up new prospects for the extraction of mineral wealth in the British Empire and found the first traces of bauxite, the mineral from which aluminium is obtained, a hundred miles inland from the coast. Thereafter, once he discovered industrial diamond and iron ore deposits, he also noticed the "narrow gorge below Ajena [...] as an ideal place for a dam."<sup>505</sup> Kitson's intuition about the economic potential which lies in the "juxtaposition of raw bauxite and potential water power" prepared the ground for the work in the five ensuing decades.<sup>506</sup>

The second name of relevance which shows up in the first stages of the VRP is that of Duncan Rose, a South African entrepreneur of British origins, who was struck by Kitson's reports, and set in motion the interest of private investors for the scheme. Together with a consulting engineer, Christopher St. John Bird, he formed the

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid. A journalist in trade, Moxon first joined the Gold Coast's Information Service in 1948, becoming closely involved in the Volta River Project as the public relations officer of the scheme. He subsequently joined the Volta River Authority (VRA), the public company created in 1961 to manage the ownership of the dam and the production of hydroelectric power, and followed from there the various steps which led to the inauguration of the Akosombo dam, in January 1966.

<sup>504</sup> The name of the river, Volta, stems from the Portuguese word for "turn", or "twist". It gives already evidence of the depth of the European penetration in this area.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., p. 49-50.

African Aluminium Syndicate, and by the end of the 1930s they began submitting proposals to the colonial Gold Coast Government, ranging from 2,5 to 6,5 million sterling in cost, for the construction of a dam, an aluminium smelter, and related electrification and transportation infrastructures. They also had to deal with the local authorities — the riverside chiefs — for land use rights; the latter turned out to be tougher bargaining partners than the colonialists had expected.<sup>507</sup>

The outbreak of the second world war interrupted the exploratory activities, but only with the resumption of peace Rose and Bird realized what they actually had achieved and what, on the contrary, they were still missing. They had managed to attract international capital to their new company founded in 1945, West African Aluminium Ltd (Wafal), and secured support from both the colonial Government in Accra and His Majesty's Government in London; what they lacked was the support of the chiefs, the local politicians and, in the end, of the people of the Gold Coast. This was a crucial factor, even in a Crown Colony, considering that many people would lose their homes, their lands and their livelihoods as a result of the flooding of an area which at that time was estimated at 1,100-1,200 square miles (in the end, it would be over 3,000 square miles, or 8,000 square kilometres).

Solid political support was needed to sustain such a vast enterprise, but the political situation in the Gold Coast of the late 1940s was too fluid for any reliable plans to be made. In 1948, for the first time in what had been so far considered a “model colony” a large popular protest was waged against the post-war economic crisis. The British decided that time had come to accelerate the process of self-rule of the colony, preparing for the eventual total independence of the country. Thereafter the purpose of the Volta scheme, or at least the way it was presented, was also meant to change: whereas up to that moment the stated objective of the Project was to secure a sterling-area aluminium source for the British Commonwealth, now in the public rhetoric it had to be presented also as an initiative which would help to

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid., p. 53-54.

develop the country's natural resources for its own economic benefit.<sup>508</sup> Clearly, this claim could be made credible only with the backing of some local politicians. It took three years until a new and relatively stable leadership could be formed after the constitutional reform of that year, and the holding of new elections. The outcome was not quite what the British had hoped for; but they accepted the victory of Nkrumah's CPP with their typical pragmatism. Nkrumah, on his part, jumped on the train of the VRP right from the start, although in 1951, when he was first elected to the role of "Leader of Government Business," his government still held only a limited responsibility in economic policy, and virtually none in terms of foreign policy.

### **The VRP, the Gold Coast Government, and the Search for Capital**

In 1949 a London firm of consulting engineers, Sir William Halcrow and Partners, was given the task to "carry out a full investigation of the potential value of the River Volta to the economy of the Gold Coast." In the following year they sent a body of experts to Ghana, the Volta River Panel, which worked on the ground for four months; then in August 1951 they presented a report with three recommendations: first, they argued that without an aluminium smelter the whole scheme would be anti-economic; second, they recommended the town of Tema as the site for the seaport to export the aluminium; and third, they suggested a number of measures to pilot the use of the water for irrigation of the Accra plains around the huge lake that the dam would create, also to mitigate its social impact.<sup>509</sup>

After the publication of Halcrows' report the two governments, Accra and London, tried to resolve the problems regarding the financing of the project and the eventual ownership of the smelter, with Aluminium Company of Canada (Alcan) gradually taking the place of Wafal as the leading interest.<sup>510</sup> At home, the British Government was busy trying to appease public opinion, still shocked by the appalling waste of development money brought by the failure of the Tanganyika Groundnut Scheme,

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<sup>508</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid., p. 68, 75.

started in 1946 by the Labour government on an input from the United Africa Company (Unilever), and scrapped for good in 1951.<sup>511</sup> In November 1952 a white paper was presented in Westminster on the Volta scheme. Although the Project was to be sited in the Gold Coast, and meant — in theory — to benefit the general economy of the colony, it was presented as “first and foremost a means for Britain to escape from the dollar-based monopoly of the post-war aluminium producers from whom she had to procure more than four-fifths of her supplies.”<sup>512</sup>

Two aspects of the 1952 white paper stick out in particular: first, the main benefit of the Project was meant to go, apart of course to the aluminium manufacturers, to British consumers, for whom a seventy-five per cent share of the eighty thousand tons of estimated aluminium production was reserved, while the Gold Coast would bear the brunt of the dislocation of the thousands of people losing their lands as a result of the creation of the largest man-made lake in the world; second, the overall cost of the Project, which had reached, including the dam, the power plant, the smelter, the bauxite extraction site and the harbour, the considerable sum of £144 million (almost \$400 million), would have to be borne by the Gold Coast and the aluminium investors for about equal accounts of £40 million each, and by the British government for the remaining £60 million.<sup>513</sup>

The scheme obviously required careful consideration and planning by all parties involved. In Ghana, one of the things that raised many concerns was that the scheme still envisaged only the creation of an aluminium industry, but not the use of the hydroelectric potential to support the general industrialization of the country. In fact, only a modest surplus of electric current of 50,000kw was meant to remain for the use of the remaining industries, when the full needs of the aluminium smelter (514,000kw) had been met. People began to wonder: was Ghana switching from a dependency on a single crop (cocoa) to one on a single mineral (bauxite)?

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<sup>511</sup> See Wood, Alan. *The Groundnut Affair*. 1st edition. London: The Bodley Head, 1950.

<sup>512</sup> Moxon, Volta: Man's Greatest Lake, p. 68.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

In 1952 a Preparatory Commission was set up to take care of this delicate phase of the Project. It was headed by Commander Robert G. A. Jackson,<sup>514</sup> an Australian who had started his career with the Royal Navy and later worked for the United Nations. With his experience in dam projects, he was to become, together with his wife, the British economist Barbara Ward, a figure close to Nkrumah.<sup>515</sup> Jackson suggested to seek the advice of experts from the US government and also from the UN on the possibilities of industrial diversification within the Volta Basin, and Nkrumah, impatient to bypass British tutelage and attract investments to the Gold Coast from sources outside the United Kingdom, eagerly accepted.<sup>516</sup>

In 1953 Jackson extensively toured North America seeking technical advice and exploring financing possibilities on behalf of the Gold Coast. He met representatives of the UN, the US government, the Tennessee Valley Authority — Roosevelt’s hydroelectric scheme being held as a model for the VRP — and Alcan in Canada. Yet the results of this public relations tour were modest. The Americans, even if the State Department considered that the Project in itself “could be of immeasurable value to the Gold Coast economy,” were not ready yet to invest or channel aid into what at that time was still a British colony; while it would in the foreseeable future become independent, its political identity and constitutional status, not to mention its foreign policy orientation, were still far from being cleared.<sup>517</sup>

In 1954, development economist W. Arthur Lewis was asked by the Ghanaian government to prepare a report on the financial and economic implications of the scheme, while Robert Jackson’s Commission still worked on the “fact-finding” side of their report, waiting for the political situation to become clearer.<sup>518</sup> To the American consul, Jackson said that “he would rather have the project agreed to by the

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<sup>514</sup> As of 1956, Sir Robert Jackson.

<sup>515</sup> They became so involved in Ghanaian affairs, that in 1956 they even named their first born son Kwame. PRAAD, RG 17/2/378.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75. Cf. FRUS, 1952–1954, Volume XI, Part 1, Document 112, the Consul at Accra (Cole) to the Department of State, 25.08.1952.

<sup>517</sup> FRUS, 1952–1954, Volume XI, Part 1, Document 115, Memorandum Prepared by Douglas B. Smith of the Investment and Economic Development Staff, 05.03.1953.

<sup>518</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake*, p. 77-78. Lewis is considered one of the most influential development economists of his time, Cooper, Frederick. *Decolonization and African society: the Labor Question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996, p. 214.



Africans after they are further advanced on the road to autonomy” as he felt that in more consolidated circumstances, there would “be less likelihood of opposition to the Agreement as an instrument of ‘economic imperialism.’”<sup>519</sup> In other words, Britain needed a broad local political consensus to make the people swallow the bitter pills that inevitably would come along once the Project terms would be more precisely defined.

Finally, between the end of 1955 and the beginning of 1956 Jackson’s Preparatory Commission presented its report. It contained some variations from the engineering point of view — the dam, a crescent-shaped rockfill type, was to be located at Ajena, and equipped with four turbines capable to produce 90,000kw each, for a total of 360,000kw — but the financial estimates were surely what attracted most attention in Accra and in London. The estimated cost for the dam and the power plant had risen by 25 per cent compared to the 1952 report, to over £67 million; the cost of the bauxite mine and the smelter by 50 per cent to over £90 million; and the transportation and communications part of the Project, including the railway and Tema harbour, from £26 to over £72 million. Moreover the Preparatory Commission had included a 45 per cent (!) additional margin to take into account possible cost increases for the following ten years, bringing the overall cost estimate to the truly extraordinary sum of £309 million, i.e. over \$850 million.<sup>520</sup>

In view of this explosion of estimated costs, it should have come as no surprise that the so-called “Rubicon talks,” which were meant to take place in London in 1956 and settle all main issues, never actually took place. The British declared that “H.M. Government remain ready to participate in the Scheme,” but at the same time emphasized that the “substantial increases in the costs” would require “substantial financial support from outside the sterling area.”<sup>521</sup> In practice, without North American and multilateral funds from the World Bank the scheme was dead.

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<sup>519</sup> FRUS, 1952–1954, Volume XI, Part 1, Document 117, the Consul at Accra (Cole) to the Department of State, 10.06.1953.

<sup>520</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake*, p. 80-82.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Considering that in the end the VRP was completed with a total investment of about £70 million, plus £30 million for the harbour of Tema, one cannot fail to wonder about what had led Jackson's Preparatory Commission to such an overestimation of the costs. It is true that substantial savings were made in the end by avoiding to build the bauxite mine and the annexed transportation systems, resorting to the use of imported bauxite. But still, even doubling the actual cost of the scheme to £200 million, this would nevertheless leave us with a massive miscalculation on the part of the Commission. One of the engineers who worked on the report, Peter Scott, was quoted as saying: "The policy of the Preparatory Commission has allowed us [...] to carry out our pre-contract investigations to a stage of detail seldom, if ever, achieved on a scheme of this nature and we feel, therefore, that [...] little in the design and estimates of this scheme has been left to chance."<sup>522</sup>

It was said that Jackson was worried that the costs could be underestimated, since "he had in mind a number of other large projects initiated since the end of World War II where the ultimate cost greatly exceeded the original estimates."<sup>523</sup> Could an excess of prudence be the reason for the Commission's miscalculation?<sup>524</sup> Or is it possible, on the contrary, that Jackson deliberately inflated the cost estimates? In April 1956, Professor Lewis wrote a confidential letter from the University of Manchester to Nkrumah, advising him against leaning too much on Jackson on what line the Gold Coast should take in the negotiations with the aluminium companies, the World Bank and the British government:

In our experience of him, both in Accra and again now in London, his chief concern is that the project should go forward at all cost. He is not in a position to influence Aluminium Ltd. or H.M.G. to make concessions, so his idea of his "duty to bring the parties together" is, in effect, to recommend the Gold Coast to make concessions. [...] Any influence which he may acquire in the formulation of Gold Coast policy at this stage is likely to be unfortunate for the Gold Coast people.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>523</sup> FRUS, 1952–1954, Volume XI, Part 1, Document 117, *ibid.*

<sup>524</sup> It is surprising that such well-informed an observer as Moxon chose not to comment on this fact in his book, apart from saying that the Commission's £300-million estimate, compared to the ones of the 1930s, "may well have caused enough red faces to make it worth renaming the forthcoming discussions the 'Rubicund talks'." Moxon, *Volta: Man's Greatest Lake*, p. 82

<sup>525</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/2/55, Arthur Lewis to Kwame Nkrumah, 12.05.1956.

Lewis was suggesting that Jackson wanted the job of consultant in the VRP no matter what, because it was much more prestigious and better remunerated than his previous post at the British Treasury, and that a failure to achieve an agreement would have proved negative for his career. But why then overestimate the project costs, at risk of sinking the entire enterprise?

More evidence would be needed to estimate the exact position of Robert Jackson, and to determine whether he was playing different tables at once. In any case, if the Commission's Report proved useful to anyone in particular this was the British government, which found in the bloated cost estimates the best excuse to pull out of an enterprise which had become increasingly controversial in England. Clearly, as some have argued, the inexperienced native leadership of the Gold Coast was "the victim of neocolonial manipulations even before it achieved independence," and Robert Jackson might as well have played some role in it.<sup>526</sup> Interestingly enough, he was knighted by the Queen in 1956 "for his services in connection with the Volta River Project."<sup>527</sup>

The negotiations with the aluminium corporations, in the meantime, were stuck on two fronts. The first was economic: the multinationals were taking time in order to explore other, possibly cheaper, options to extract bauxite and produce aluminium, such as the huge reserves of mineral discovered in French Guinea.<sup>528</sup> Moreover, the issue of the cost of electricity for the aluminium smelter — a crucial problem, as obtaining aluminium from alumina ore by the Hall-Heroult procedure requires vast amounts of electricity — still needed to be resolved. The second front was political: the Gold Coast was rushing towards independence, and in 1956 the British were pushing for new elections, still hoping for a more conservative opposition against Nkrumah and the CPP to emerge. It was clearly not the right moment to speed up towards a settlement on the VRP.

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<sup>526</sup> Birmingham, David. *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism*. Rev. ed. Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1998, p. 65.

<sup>527</sup> Moxon, Volta: Man's Greatest Lake, p. 83.

<sup>528</sup> Cf. FRUS, 1961–1963 Volume XXI, Africa, Document 223, Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Penfield) to the Under Secretary of State (Bowles), 17.02.1961.

## **The VRP Goes American - Part 1: The Eisenhower Administration**

The 1956 election, in which the CPP won 82 per cent of the votes, resulted in a plebiscite in favour of Nkrumah's platform of "self-government now." In September the Governor finally set the definitive date for independence. Thereafter, Ghana tried to move the VRP out of the stalemate. In the run-up of the independence celebrations, Nkrumah met in Accra with US Vice-President Nixon. During the conversation, the prime minister of Ghana insisted on the importance of attaining economic independence after political independence. He said that that he was concerned about the heavy reliance of the country on cocoa, and "therefore anxious to diversify the economy both by general agricultural development and by exploiting the country's mineral resources — particularly bauxite."<sup>529</sup> He naturally mentioned the Volta scheme as the single initiative which would most advance Ghana's development, saying that the only issue still open was financing, for which they were waiting for an evaluation from the IBRD. Nixon avoided taking any specific position. The US government still held reservations about this newborn nation, which it judged economically vulnerable and of uncertain political orientation in the Cold War. Nevertheless Nixon, after his Africa trip, recommended that the United States, in view of Ghana's role as bellwether in Africa, help the country to overcome its "growing pains," and to continue to closely follow the Volta scheme in order to ascertain "whether it is a well-conceived and practical project which we should support in the IBRD and perhaps aid to a limited extent ourselves."<sup>530</sup>

Unwitting aid for Ghana came from a restaurant chain in the United States. The episode is well known. During a trip in the United States, in October 1957, the Ghanaian Minister of Finance Gbedemah was supposed to meet representatives of the IBRD and the IMF in Washington. His assistant, an African-American who had previously run a school in Ghana, suggested they make a stop on the road at a

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<sup>529</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 16, Memorandum From the Officer in Charge of Southern Africa Economic Affairs (Longanecker) to the Director of the Office of Southern Africa Affairs (Hadsel), 31.10.1956. The US especially resented the fact that Ghana had decided to invite, despite American pressure, the People's Republic of China to the independence celebrations instead of Taiwan.

<sup>530</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 19, Report by the Vice President, 05.04.1957.

Howard Johnson restaurant in Delaware, as he wanted the minister to see with his own eyes that while they had been served at a restaurant of the same chain in New Jersey, in Delaware they would not, because of their colour. They made the test and, as predicted, the manager refused the two gentlemen being served.<sup>531</sup>

Gbedemah was a shrewd politician, and knew of the potential political value of this episode. Considering that he wasn't holding many cards in his hands for the negotiations, he didn't hesitate to leak the story to the press, creating a diplomatic incident which made headlines. The move paid off: to repair the image damage, Eisenhower decided to invite Gbedemah for breakfast at the White House. There the minister met with him and the vice-president and discussed, of course, the Volta scheme. Eisenhower did not exactly react with enthusiasm, but felt in any case compelled to instruct Nixon as following: "Dick, would you take care of it?"<sup>532</sup> In Ghana, Nkrumah was furious because Gbedemah had dared to meet the president of the United States of America before he did.<sup>533</sup> Nevertheless, he postponed his revenge against Gbedemah, and kept striking the VRP hammer as long as the American iron was hot.

Two weeks after, Nkrumah sent the first volume of the Preparatory Commission's Report to Eisenhower, without obtaining any concrete response.<sup>534</sup> He decided to insist, and after two more weeks wrote a detailed letter to Eisenhower, explaining how desperate Ghana was to go ahead with the Project, which he pictured as the only chance to get away from the dependency on cocoa.<sup>535</sup> Then, knowing that the Americans were interested in good relations with the "awakening continent," and

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<sup>531</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957 Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 130, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 09.10.1957.

<sup>532</sup> Quoted in Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 19.

<sup>533</sup> Nkrumah told the American ambassador, who was expecting to find Nkrumah incensed over the restaurant incident, that if he had experienced same incident as Gbedemah he would have kept quiet, which Gbedemah should have done", and suggested that maybe somebody "had manoeuvred Gbedemah into provocative situation". FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 131, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 10.10.1957.

<sup>534</sup> FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 132, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 06.11.1957.

<sup>535</sup> "All our studies show that the most promising hope of a really big immediate economic advance lies in developing our great deposits of bauxite, which can be used to produce aluminium by developing also the hydro-electric possibilities of the Volta River, with its capacity of 633,000 Kilowatts." FRUS, 1955–1957, Volume XVIII, Africa, Document 133, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 15.11.1957.

that they considered Ghana the entrance point of it, he reminded Eisenhower that “a failure to develop the project would mean [...] a demonstration that we are incapable of consolidating the political independence which we have just won [...] [this] would have profound effect on the rest of Africa.” He closed the letter reminding that “if the Government of the United States could provide the stimulus and drive which could bring the scheme to life [...] such actions would demonstrate to the world most convincingly and dramatically the general policies towards this continent which both you and the Vice-President have expressed so clearly in your public statements.”<sup>536</sup>

Eisenhower responded in March 1958 by inviting Nkrumah to meet him in Washington. America’s interest in fostering good relations with Nkrumah in order to keep him tied to the West and counterbalance the influence of Egypt’s President Nasser was growing. Clarence Randall, chairman of the Council on Economic Foreign Policy, was sent by the Eisenhower on an Africa tour, and returned, after meeting with colonial governors and white ministers, full of paternalist wisdom on Africa, but also declaring that “the greatest resource of Africa South of the Sahara consisted of hydroelectric power” and that “in His infinite wisdom, Divine Providence had located large bauxite-producing areas adjacent to most of these dams.”<sup>537</sup>

In 1958 the aluminium industry was in fact living a considerable surplus capacity of production. Nonetheless, despite the alleged lack of interest by the private sector, when Eisenhower met Nkrumah at the White House in July he referred the Ghanaian prime minister to the head of one of the leading aluminium corporations in the world, Edgar Kaiser, of the homonymous California-based corporation.<sup>538</sup> The two met for the first time in New York, and according to Moxon, “from the outset an accord was struck.”<sup>539</sup> Kaiser agreed to undertake a review of the previous technical report on the project, and sent a mission to Ghana, which began to examine the situation on the

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<sup>536</sup> Ibid..

<sup>537</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960 Volume XIV, Africa, Document 4, Memorandum of Discussion at the 365th Meeting of the National Security Council, 08.05.1958.

<sup>538</sup> Cf. FRUS, 1958–1960 Volume XIV, Africa, Document 295, Memorandum of Conversation 24.07.1958.

<sup>539</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake*, p. 91.

ground. But if the private industry was not, at that time, interested in opening new sources of bauxite, why was Kaiser keen to explore the details of the Volta scheme?

The answer was to be found in the report presented by the company's experts, after six months of intense scrutiny. The crucial issue of the entire scheme, ever since the 1955 report, had been the overall cost of the project, this mountain of almost \$900 million which had scared off the British government first, and was now keeping wary the multinational corporations. In order to cut away all the dead weight, the Kaiser report stripped down the Project to its three essential features: the dam with the power plant, the smelter, and the harbour.<sup>540</sup>

Kaiser's experts recommended to move the dam to the site of Akosombo, and argued that the smelter should be located at Tema, although they knew that this would create congestion problems there. Most important, they said that it was the cost of creating from scratch the bauxite mine and the alumina production plant with the correlated railway transportation system that was driving up the cost of the project. Using imported alumina instead — Kaiser owned large bauxite deposits in Jamaica — one would save at least £60 million, bringing the overall cost to a much more reasonable £70 million (i.e. about \$200 million), to be shared between Ghana, the United States, the British government, the private investors, and the IBRD.<sup>541</sup>

Two things are especially interesting to note in regard to Kaiser's reassessment of the VRP: the first, immediately noted by all parties concerned, was that giving up the use of Ghanaian bauxite meant a radical transformation of the terms upon which the Volta scheme had been conceived ever since colonial times. Whereas Ghana's comparative advantage had been seen in the proximity of bauxite deposits and large sources of hydroelectric power, now Ghana's role was basically reduced to that of a supplier of cheap electricity. The second remarkable aspect, which on the contrary all observers have so far failed to appreciate, is that the cost estimate of Sir Robert Jackson's Preparatory Commission, 309 million pound sterling, had virtually

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<sup>540</sup> "Excluded from review", of course, "were such subjects as lake-side resettlement, new town sites, health measures and new ports", which remained problems of the Ghana government. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

disappeared from the public discourse. The Kaiser reassessment considered instead the much lower estimate made by the British in 1952, i.e. £140 million, as the overall cost, from which the £60 million due for the bauxite mine and the alumina extraction plant was deduced, bringing thus the net total to £70 million. In the end, this was the sum that was actually invested in the Project. The question why nobody, neither at the time of the facts nor afterwards, has ever criticized the Jackson report for its grossly inflated cost estimates, remains to date a mystery of this grandiose but controversial scheme.

There was another important corollary to the new situation created by the Kaiser reassessment. Having lost its comparative advantage as a combined supplier of raw material, infrastructure and power and downgraded to a mere supplier of power and port facilities, Ghana now had even less bargaining power in regard to the other crucial aspect of the negotiations, namely the price of electricity. After all, the multinationals could build now their plant anywhere in the world where cheap power and a harbour were available. Knowing also that Ghana was a newly independent, developing country with modest infrastructure, led by a radical, socialist, black president, and that world prices of bauxite were low, the Western aluminium interests (Kaiser, the Reynolds Corporation, Alcan, Alcoa and Olin Mathieson) saw their chance to play tough in the negotiations. Kaiser thus proposed the bargain price of 2,5 mills per kW/h — a mill being one-tenth of a US dollar cent — for the electricity bill of the aluminium smelter.<sup>542</sup>

In January 1960 a World Bank mission arrived in Ghana in order to carry out a survey of the state of the country's economy, in particular of its credit-worthiness. Commenting on the VRP, they said that, sound as it might have been from an engineering point of view, it was “not exciting” for Ghana as an investment, as it would yield an average return of 3 per cent for the first ten years, and maximum 7 per cent over the rest of the life of the Project. These figures though were calculated

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<sup>542</sup> Hart cites some terms of comparison to understand what kind of proposal this was:

- The average cost of electricity for primary metal production in the USA in the 1960s was 7 mills per kW/h;
- Kaiser Aluminium, in 1976, paid 12 kW/h for energy for its smelter of Ravenswood, West Virginia.
- 4,5 mills kW/h was the rate the IBRD suggested should be given to Valco. The Volta River Project, p. 63.



considering a power rate for the aluminium smelter of 4,5 mills kW/h — in no case, so the IBRD reckoned, should Akosombo's electricity be sold for less than 3 mills. The aluminium manufacturers sensed however that Nkrumah was determined to bring the VRP to conclusion at all costs, and this further weakened Ghana's bargaining position, which was already far from optimal, considering the disparity of forces on the ground — the turnover of the Kaiser Corporation alone equalled Ghana's gross domestic product.<sup>543</sup>

As it became clear that the use of Ghanaian bauxite was not on the agenda, the aluminium side of the venture was put aside in the official discourse of the Ghana government, while praising the generic benefits for the electrification and the industrialization of the country. Nkrumah gambled on the hope that the large investment in the VRP would trigger a “spillover-effect”, leading to the development of many collateral industrial and agricultural sectors, and in the end, of the country as a whole. In this, he was encouraged by his foreign consultants on economic policy. In Western circles considerations like the following were commonplace at the time:

At present [Ghana's] public investment is about 7 ½% of the national income. [...] Volta will bring total investment to over 15% of national income which is often regarded as the critical point necessary to sustain unaided development. In short this single earthwork with its ancillary smelter should enable Ghana to become one [of] the first countries in Africa or Asia — and indeed in the non-white Western world, to achieve economic break-through.<sup>544</sup>

It was this kind of simplistic interpretations of the “big push” theory, first devised by Rosenstein-Rodan in the 1940s and quite fashionable in the post-war period, which led to the idea that raising the level of total investment in a given country above a certain threshold would spur a development chain reaction leading the country out of poverty. It is true that compared to the plans of the British white paper, the quota of electricity available for general use had increased, from 50MW to about half of the output of 588MW from the dam's four turbines.<sup>545</sup> However, considering the price at which the power was sold to its main purchaser, namely the smelter, and

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<sup>543</sup> Hart, *The Volta River Project*, p. 40.

<sup>544</sup> TNA, DO 35/9427, V.E. Davis, “Some Notes of Ghana's Financial Position with Special Reference to the Volta River Project and the Second Development Plan”, 20.07.1960.

<sup>545</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man's Greatest Lake*, p. 95. Cf. Hart, *The Volta River Project*, p. 64-65.

the heavy burden of expenses and debt that Ghana would have to carry, the VRP could hardly be depicted as “the source of abundant cheap electricity” that Nkrumah had in mind — power would in fact be cheap only for the multinationals.

Ghana was growing economically and demographically, yet Nkrumah knew that without a large single customer such as the smelter for the dam’s power, the United States, the United Kingdom and the IBRD would not agree to finance the scheme — there was still no internal market for that amount of electricity. He knew as well that while the aluminium corporations could wait for a better moment to sign an agreement, the time factor was not on his side. Nkrumah’s regime was a populist one, found on the support of the masses, which expected an improved living standard like the CPP had promised at every electoral consultation since 1951. As is the case for most politicians around the world, Nkrumah was under pressure to deliver visible, impactful results, and the VRP was the best option of a single initiative that could be presented as the symbol of the country’s progress.

On 17 November 1960, the Ghanaian government thus announced that, pending the conclusion of the financing arrangements, full agreement had been reached with the Volta Aluminium Company (Valco) — the Ghanaian company started in 1959 by the foreign aluminium interests as a consortium— with the subscription of a special electricity rate of 2.625 mills per unit, a figure much closer to Kaiser’s original proposal than to the World Bank’s suggested rate.<sup>546</sup> At this rate, it was calculated that Ghana would repay its initial investment, including the debts servicing, over the thirty-year period of the contract with Valco; however, there would hardly be any profit margin, and thus no further investment. According to Hart’s calculations, even taking account of the price adjustment that were operated during the 1970s, for over thirty years Ghana thus provided the smelter with power for a price that barely covered the cost of supply.<sup>547</sup>

Having assured the support the aluminium corporations, and a £14-million investment on their part, the issue was now for Ghana to assure the financing of the

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<sup>546</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake*, p. 107.

<sup>547</sup> Hart, *The Volta River Project*, 64-65.

remaining £30 to 35 million, for which the help of the United States and the World Bank was needed. On this side the perspectives seemed rather good. At the end of July, Nkrumah had requested in a letter to Eisenhower the “active interest” of the US government in the negotiations, scheduled for August, between Ghana and the IBRD.<sup>548</sup> In September 1960, the Department of State announced the conditions under which the United States would provide funds for \$30 million in loans.<sup>549</sup> However, after Nkrumah, now president of the Republic of Ghana, delivered an anti-colonial speech at the United Nations, the political relations between Ghana and the United States suddenly soured. Although repeated advice had come from the American embassy in Accra, saying that Ghana’s recent opening towards the Soviet Union and China did not mean that the country was “going communist,” the VRP negotiations were put on hold for some time.<sup>550</sup>

## **The VRP Goes American - Part 2: The Kennedy Administration**

The change of administration in Washington in January 1961 seemed to be a good omen for a rapid conclusion of the VRP negotiations — Kennedy had already taken interest in African affairs as a senator, speaking out against the war in Algeria, and helping the Ghanaians get the loans they needed for the Volta scheme.<sup>551</sup> So, in February 1961 Nkrumah sent Gbedemah again to Washington to finalize the contracts under which the World Bank and US government loans for the VRP would be made possible. The atmosphere was still not very favourable — the news of Guinea and possibly Ghana turning to Moscow had prompted the aluminium multinationals to request from the State Department guarantees for all but commercial risks — also for similar ventures in Guinea.

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<sup>548</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 298, Letter From President Eisenhower to President Nkrumah, 07.08.1960.

<sup>549</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Document 300, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 05.09.1960.

<sup>550</sup> FRUS, 1958–1960 Volume XIV, Africa, Document 304, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 13.10.1960. Cf. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 20-24.

<sup>551</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake*, p. 105.

The State Department recognized “that a refusal to aid the Volta Project or a withdrawal of the aluminium companies from the Valco smelter would have very undesirable effect on Western relations with Ghana”; discussions began not only around guarantees, but also for a loan for the private interests involved.<sup>552</sup> Then, again, the developments in the Congo crisis brought US-African relations to one of their lowest points ever, when in February 1961, less than a month after Kennedy had taken his oath, the Katanga secessionist regime revealed that Patrice Lumumba had been killed. A wave of protest and outrage followed all over Africa and the world, as many blamed CIA interference for the assassination.<sup>553</sup>

As Kennedy tried to rebuild the image of the United States among the African and Third World nationalists, the VRP underwent once again a transformation in its purpose. While it was becoming increasingly clear that the main beneficiaries of the scheme would be the private corporations and not the Ghanaian people, Ghana’s tense relations with the West, and the increasing penetration of the Soviet Union in Africa, created the political necessity to support the Project in order to show that America cared for the necessities of the developing world. Kennedy knew that withdrawing from the Volta scheme would have been an extraordinary assist for Moscow, which longed for a similar image coup as had been the construction of the Aswan Dam for Egypt. Nevertheless, the issue remained highly controversial, inside the US administration and outside, considering that Nkrumah, outraged for the Congo crisis, over the course of 1961 did actually express sympathy for the positions of the Russians on many subjects.<sup>554</sup>

In March 1961 Kennedy invited Nkrumah to meet him at the White House, and drew heavily on the personal charm tactic to try to win the heart and the mind of the Ghanaian president. However, the latter decided not to touch upon the issue of the VRP during the official talks; Kennedy had to wait for a private conversation to ask Nkrumah not to provide any pretext to those who wanted the US government to pull

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<sup>552</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 223, Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Penfield) to the Under Secretary of State (Bowles), 17.02.1961.

<sup>553</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 75-76.

<sup>554</sup> Cf. Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 162 ff.

out of the Project.<sup>555</sup> Overall the visit — carefully prepared with briefings and advice from knowledgeable figures such as Barbara Ward, a close friend of the Kennedys — was a success, and Nkrumah left with very positive feelings towards J.F.K. and his family. It was not enough, however, for correcting Ghana's leftist course in that period, which complicated the negotiations for the Volta scheme. These were stuck now at the World Bank, whose interference in Ghana's economic policy Nkrumah resented.

It is difficult to exactly estimate the role of the IBRD and its president, Eugene Black, in this phase.<sup>556</sup> Moxon stresses that this was “the most complicated project ever undertaken by the World Bank,” implying that some bureaucratic resistance was therefore inevitable.<sup>557</sup> The best estimate of the Bank's role however is probably that of Hart, according to which the IBRD tried to act during the VRP negotiations “as a buffer between the Ghana government and the competitive commercial interests involved in the project,” bearing in mind that the World Bank is “an international organisation strongly influenced by the requirements of U.S. government foreign policy,” which thus has to steer “a middle course between the desire of the majority of its members, that is, international development, and the desires of the U.S. government, that is, primarily a successful foreign policy and secondarily a commercial economic return.”<sup>558</sup>

In retrospect, at least some of the advice given by the IBRD to Ghana, such as an electricity rate of 4,5 mills kW/h for the aluminium smelter, was actually sound. The fact that most of it was brushed aside for political reasons, not only by the Ghana government but also by the United States, shows on the one hand that the World Bank truly was (and still is) an institution quite vulnerable to high level political

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid., p. 80. Cf. FRUS, 1961–1963 Volume XXI, Africa, Document 225, Memorandum of Conversation, 08.03.1961.

<sup>556</sup> Muehlenbeck writes that in 1961 Nkrumah “inexplicably refused to accept the conditions advocated by the World Bank [...] on the grounds that the bank should not dictate Ghanaian fiscal policy”, but does not provide further details as to which measures the bank exactly requested or recommended. *Betting on the Africans*, p. 81.

<sup>557</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man's Greatest Lake*, p. 110-111.

<sup>558</sup> Hart, *The Volta River Project*, p. 50. It seems though that Eugene Black was himself trying behind the scenes to clear the field from hindrances, among other “working on the CIA”, who were never real supporters of the Volta Project. This would indicate a more proactive and less deferential attitude of the World Bank than commonly held. TNA, FO 371/154810, Rowley Cromer to Denis Rickett (H.M. Treasury), 06.01.1961.

pressure from Washington; on the other, that the VRP by 1961 had entered, from the perspective of the leading circles in Accra, Washington and London, a new phase, in which political considerations were paramount.

The gravest risk as seen from the White House and from Downing Street was the possibility — of which Western-friendly Ghanaians had repeatedly warned — that Nkrumah would lose patience with the West and hand over the project to the Soviet Union.<sup>559</sup> In January 1961 Nkrumah announced to his parliament that Soviet technicians would conduct a feasibility study regarding the construction of a hydroelectric scheme at Bui, on the Black Volta, one of the three main tributaries of the Volta.<sup>560</sup> It was a minor project compared to the dam in Akosombo, but the announcement reinforced Washington's mistrust.

One month later the Soviet Union's titular head of state, Leonid Brezhnev, came on official visit to Ghana; shortly thereafter it was announced that Nkrumah himself would that year reciprocate the courtesy by an extended tour of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the People's Republic of China. The British were particularly nervous that if Nkrumah left for his tour behind the Iron Curtain without having sufficient guarantees in regard to the Volta scheme, he might not be able to resist, as Barbara Ward put it, "the open cheque book waved under his nose in the Kremlin."<sup>561</sup> They tried to convey to Washington in all possible ways

the disastrous consequences which would in our opinion flow if at the eleventh hour the negotiations for Volta broke down owing to American second thoughts. Surely the lesson of Aswan cannot be lost on them. [...] If the Americans do not like some of the things which have happened in Ghana recently, they should consider what might happen if that country went completely over to the Soviet camp.<sup>562</sup>

Kennedy managed to resist the pressure that was mounting against Nkrumah and American participation in the Volta scheme, and on 29 June sent a letter to Nkrumah in which he announced that "all major issues involved in negotiations for the United

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<sup>559</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man's Greatest Lake*, p. 104.

<sup>560</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man's Greatest Lake*, p. 109.

<sup>561</sup> As quoted in Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 82.

<sup>562</sup> TNA, FO 371/154811, J.O. Moreton (CRO) to W.H. de Boulay, Esq., British Embassy, Washington, 24.05.1961.

States Government's share of the financing of the dam and smelter have now been resolved.”<sup>563</sup>

If J.F.K. thought that out of gratefulness for this assurance Nkrumah would have softened the tones of his anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic rhetoric, he had clearly miscalculated.<sup>564</sup> At the same time prominent figures, from Kennedy's Ambassador in Accra Francis Russell, to the new chairman of the Senate Sub-Committee on African Affairs Albert Gore Sr., were recommending not to reward Ghana's honeymoon with Moscow and to distribute instead America's aid among the more Western-friendly African states.<sup>565</sup> So when in September news of growing popular discontent in Ghana and rumours of a possible regime change spread, Kennedy faltered, and told Acting Under Secretary of State George W. Ball that he wanted to “hold up any final decision and announcement of the Volta project for Ghana,” while Nkrumah, who returned from his trip to the Soviet Union only late in September, was expecting the signing of the final agreement to take place at the beginning of October.<sup>566</sup>

Kennedy seemed disillusioned in regard to Nkrumah. He said that “he had given up on him,” and that he would have rather given Ghana “just a little aid just to keep the contact,” but “not that kind of aid [the VRP].” Perhaps he was hoping that a new and more reasonable leadership appeared in Ghana; in any case, if the United States was to go ahead with this affair, Kennedy wanted a better timing to confirm it, and so the State Department announced that Assistant Secretary of State Mennen “Soapy” Williams would come to Accra in October “for an informal visit,” providing Kennedy some breathing space.<sup>567</sup>

A frantic period of internal and bilateral consultations began. Edgar Kaiser, together with his chief negotiator Chad Calhoun, flew over to Accra to discuss the

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<sup>563</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 227, Letter From President Kennedy to President Nkrumah, 29.06.1961.

<sup>564</sup> Cf. TNA, DO 195/5; DO 195/6, “Joint Soviet-Ghanaian Communique”.

<sup>565</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 83.

<sup>566</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 233, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 27.09.1961.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*

matter and warn Nkrumah that his leftist course was endangering the Project. Apparently he returned reassured about Nkrumah's intentions, and told Kennedy so.<sup>568</sup> Kaiser, for his part, was by 1961 one of the biggest stakeholders in this matter. Since Alcan had left in 1960, and Alcoa and Olin Mathieson dropped out in 1961, he now owned 90 per cent of Valco and of the future smelter, while Reynolds Metals held the remaining 10 per cent. In September the US government had accepted to make available, through the Export Import Bank, \$96 million out of the total \$128 million needed for the construction of the smelter as a mortgage loan. Kaiser and Reynolds, therefore, had only \$32 million to cover by direct capital investment, guaranteed against political risks.<sup>569</sup>

Considering the aid the US government was giving to the aluminium interests, and the fabulous conditions that Valco was able to negotiate with Ghana in regard to the cost of electricity, tax exemptions, import and export duties et cetera, it is clear that a failure in the negotiations at this point would have cost the corporations the opportunity for an investment at extremely favourable conditions. As a Kaiser representative put it: "Where else could we get a 120,000 ton aluminium smelter, costing \$150,000,000, of which 85% was supported by debts, 90% of that covered by the American government."<sup>570</sup> So while it is possible to say on the whole "it was not economic interests but pragmatic, strategic considerations that convinced JFK of Africa's importance," in the case of the Volta scheme there was clearly a major element of economic interest implicated in the United States' position, of which Kennedy undoubtedly was aware.<sup>571</sup>

At the end of October the US government sent a mission to Ghana led by Clarence Randall, the Republican businessman who had already toured Africa on behalf of the Eisenhower administration. He came back from his meeting with Nkrumah recommending a "one-year moratorium" of the Project; Congress instead was clearly

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<sup>568</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man's Greatest Lake*, p. 113.

<sup>569</sup> Hart, *The Volta River Project*, p. 45.

<sup>570</sup> As quoted in Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 190.

<sup>571</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 225.



manifesting its contrariety.<sup>572</sup> However, it seems that the decision Kennedy had to make was not as difficult as it was said, considering that apart from Treasury Secretary Dillon, who considered Nkrumah “a Castro,” and Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who argued that the moderate African leaders were against American participation, all other relevant, informed interests, from the State Department to the CIA, as well as all but African heads of state, were unanimous in saying that the scheme was by now in too an advanced stage for the United States to withdraw without consequences, and that an adverse decision would put Nkrumah under tremendous pressure to complete the Project with the help of Russia, creating a second Aswan.<sup>573</sup>

Moreover, in November the Queen had successfully carried out her first state visit to Ghana, and reinforced the country’s ties to the Commonwealth. The British prime minister told Kennedy: “I have risked my Queen, you must risk your money.”<sup>574</sup> So, even though Kennedy at the end of September clearly wavered and played with the thought of disengaging from the Volta Project because of what he perceived as Nkrumah’s anti-American attitude, the fact that he waited until 12 December 1961 to confirm the US government’s participation was probably just a tactic to keep Nkrumah a little longer on tenterhooks, postponing to officialize a decision that de facto had already been made, mostly by the Eisenhower administration. The United States had already to deal with the consequences of the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs and the assassination of Lumumba — another Aswan case might have proved fatal for the relations with the developing countries.

In February 1962, therefore, the financial agreement was definitely sealed, securing the works on the dam, which had already begun in June 1961. The contract for building the dam had been awarded to the Italian consortium Impregilo — the name stands for *Imprese Italiane all’Estero* (Impresit) plus *Impresa Girola* plus

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<sup>572</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 237, Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Ball) to President Kennedy, 18.10.1961.

<sup>573</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 239, Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Kennedy, 01.12.1961; Document 240, Notes for the Record, NSC Meeting On Volta Dam, 05.12.1961.

<sup>574</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 88.

Impresa Lodigiani — which by that time had already but completed the construction of the Kariba dam in Rhodesia and had presented for the Volta Project what for Gbedemah was “the lowest acceptable bid,” worth £16 million, four million less than the original estimates.<sup>575</sup> It took four years until the works were completed. The official inauguration of the dam with its four-turbines power plant took place on 22 January 1966, one month before a military coup d’état toppled the CPP regime and ended the “Ghana experiment.” Nkrumah said on that occasion that Kaiser, Eisenhower and Kennedy “recognized in the Volta River Project a scheme with new dimensions of growth and development which they felt could benefit both Ghana and the United States”, and cited the Volta Project as “living proof that nations and people can co-operate and co-exist peacefully with mutual advantage to themselves despite differences of economic and political opinions,” before his wife unveiled a plaque honouring the role of the two American presidents in the Project.<sup>576</sup>

## **The VRP and its Results**

As a result of the construction of the Akosombo dam a huge lake of about 8,500 km<sup>2</sup> was created, and 80,000 people, at the time over one per cent of Ghana’s population, had to be resettled by the Volta River Authority (VRA), proprietor of the dam and the power house.<sup>577</sup> The construction of the aluminium smelter began in June 1964 and was completed in 1967, with three potlines in operation.<sup>578</sup> For over thirty years, Valco remained the main customer for the Akosombo’s dam electricity, and although the electricity rate was revised in the 1970s from 2.625 mills to 3.25

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<sup>575</sup> TNA, FO 371/154810, Telegram from Accra (Acting High Commissioner) to Commonwealth Relations Office, 18.02.1961.

<sup>576</sup> Quoted in Moxon, *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake*, p. 222-223.

<sup>577</sup> However, a really satisfying solution for the economic and social reintegration of the resettled communities has never been found, while the gigantic lake has become a breeding ground for water-borne diseases, such as bilharzia (urinary schistosomiasis) but also river blindness (onchocerciasis). Hart, *The Volta River Project*, p. 76 ff.; Moxon, *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake*, p. 277

<sup>578</sup> Moxon, *Volta: Man’s Greatest Lake*, p. 205-208.

mills/kWh, Kaiser and Reynolds continued to make exceptional profits out of their \$34 million investment.<sup>579</sup>

However, the aluminium corporations obstinately resisted Ghana's pressures to invest into a bauxite mine and an alumina plant in Ghana. Kaiser had declared already in the 1960s that "under conditions which exists in Ghana today, I would not finance 10 cents and I simply do not know when conditions will allow the financing of an alumina plant" — apparently ever since then the conditions never improved, as an integrated aluminium industry in Ghana has never seen the light of day; to date, Valco continues to rely on imported alumina.<sup>580</sup>

From 1982 onwards a long productive crisis began, marked by the failure of the VRA to guarantee a steady supply of electricity, and various aborted rounds of negotiations on a new power rate. As of 2002 the company began to shut down the operating lines of the smelter due to power shortages, and in October 2004 the plant closed down completely as Kaiser, after an almost 40-year presence in Ghana, sold its 90 per cent stake and pulled out. The Ghanaian government eventually remained the sole owner of Valco. In 2011, the aluminium smelter has reopened, now wholly government-owned, operating at a 20 per cent capacity and employing 500 workers, one third of the original labour force of 1,500.<sup>581</sup> Ghana is now on its own in the effort to finally establish a sustainable, integrated aluminium industry.

So must we agree with what Bing wrote in 1968, "in so far as any of Nkrumah's development projects were of a neo-colonialist nature, the Volta Hydro-Electric Scheme best fitted this pattern"?<sup>582</sup> It is clear that the negotiations which led to the agreement for the VRP presented the "classic neocolonialist situation," with an enormous disparity of forces involved: "It was the biggest investment in Africa; Ghana was negotiating with the world's greatest power, with one of its many corporations whose earnings equalled Ghana's annual product itself, and with the

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<sup>579</sup> Moxon's estimate is that over a 30-year period, Reynolds revenue from the sale of Valco alumina would amount to £100 million (about \$250 million), while that of Kaiser to almost a billion pound sterling, about \$2.5 billion! *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>581</sup> <http://www.valcotema.com/history.html> [16.02.2015]

<sup>582</sup> Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, p. 392.

World Bank, which, while sceptical from the first about the project, was prepared to follow the American lead.”<sup>583</sup> It is a fact that the VRP was initially developed as a colonial scheme by the British and the South Africans, to serve British interests by exploiting African resources. It was then taken over by Nkrumah’s nationalist government and supported even when the use of Ghanaian bauxite was discarded by the multinational corporations, in the hope that the electrification of the country would spur development and modernization.

The US government (and the World Bank) supported it mainly for political reasons, i.e. to keep Ghana and Africa tied to the West, improve America’s image on the African continent, and contain the Soviet Union’s advance.<sup>584</sup> Yet the clear winners of the game were the aluminium companies, which benefited from the Cold War setting like probably no Third World country has ever been able to do. There is a good deal of truth in Hart’s words:

The VRP did not arise from a desire of the people of Ghana [...] This is fundamental in explaining its lack of success as far as Ghana is concerned. The VRP was conceived originally as a means of fulfilling the aims of non-Ghanaian parties. The project was adopted by newly independent Ghana without, it appears, very much thought for its relevance. Attempts were made to investigate the possibility for a smaller hydro-electric scheme that would have suited Ghana’s power needs, but only as a kind of second choice to the VRP. The possibility of building an aluminium smelter much later, when Ghana’s demand for aluminium warranted it, does not seem to have gained serious credence.<sup>585</sup>

Nowadays, though the Volta dam did not spur much industrialization, and blackouts are the order of the day in Ghana, considering that the Akosombo dam still produces about half of it’s badly-needed supply of electricity, it is hard to say that the country would be better off without it.<sup>586</sup> Might the VRP’s money have been better invested elsewhere at the time? This is a question that it seems difficult to deny; however, the ways to squander taxpayer and borrowed money are infinite, thus nobody will be ever able to know for sure.

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<sup>583</sup> Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 190.

<sup>584</sup> A 1963 State Department memorandum confirmed: “The Volta-Valco project is serving well its political purpose — to retain a significant Western role and influence in Ghana.” FRUS, 1961–1963 Volume XXI, Africa, Document 252, Memorandum From the Department of State Executive Secretary (Brubeck) to President Kennedy, 30.10.1963.

<sup>585</sup> Hart, *The Volta River Project*, p. 105-106.

<sup>586</sup> The Volta River Authority, “Ghana’s Power Outlook,” [www.vra.com](http://www.vra.com) [18.05.2015].

In any case, the idea that Ghana as a naïf, new-born state was tricked into the deal by cunning Western businessmen, politicians and lawyers, and carelessly stepped into the venture without much thought holds up only to a certain extent. Nkrumah undoubtedly was an idealist, and quixotic in many respects; nonetheless he was disillusioned enough about the intentions of large capitalist corporations and Western governments.<sup>587</sup> As we have seen, he wanted the Volta scheme to go through at all costs, and was willing to make a pact with the devil to see it come to conclusion. This, again, happened for political reasons. Nkrumah was desperate to present the Ghanaian people, but also the rest of Africa and the world, with grandiose results of his rule, and in order to achieve this goal he did not hesitate to drain his own country's finances.

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<sup>587</sup> Nkrumah himself stated: "In Africa the consortium [of monopoly capitalism] is making the most sinister penetrations. It extends from the monopolistic amalgamations of American and European finance-capital, particularly those combined with the European Common Market [...] The prime objective is to monopolise Africa's sources of raw materials, not, as it is claimed, to assist the African countries to develop their economies." Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. London: Heinemann, 1965, p. 65.

## 2.3 Kennedy and Nkrumah: The Cordial Hostility?

When John Fitzgerald Kennedy assumed office, in January 1961, Ghanaian-American, and to a good extent, African-US relations, were at their historic lowest point.<sup>588</sup> It was not uncommon to read passages like the following in Ghana's newspapers:

Not many political leaders are left in the African countries who do not understand what a grave menace American imperialism constitutes to the freedom and economic advancement of their peoples. This is what prompts the United States imperialists to resort to violence, conspiracies, and military *coups*. They use the same fouled methods in Africa that they practise so broadly in Latin America. What is more, they try to camouflage their expansion with the United Nations flag, whose machinery is largely subservient to the State Department and whose Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskiöld, has placed himself at the disposal of the Colonialists. To abduct Europa, Zeus took the shape of a white bull. To abduct Africa, the moguls of American business pretend to be its friends and benefactors. But no mask can conceal their fangs. American imperialism is the worst enemy of the peoples of Africa, now fighting for their complete liberation.<sup>589</sup>

The Congo issue was in those days the main bone of contention between nationalist Africa and the leading Western states. However, criticism against Western policy in Africa — or elsewhere in the Third World, for that matter — was often seen in the West as either directly inspired by communists, or the result of ideological prejudice on the part of ruling nationalists, who intended to discredit the West for the purpose of making their governments' ongoing rapprochement with the Soviet Union more palatable to their public opinion.<sup>590</sup>

As has been noted, Kennedy and his government held a different view on how to approach Third World neutralism and the rising nationalism in the developing countries.<sup>591</sup> Kennedy's Special Adviser Schlesinger called it "the policy of helping the new nations to strength and independence."<sup>592</sup> In the view of the new administration's "best and brightest," the United States was supposed to abandon, or

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<sup>588</sup> In the words of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.: "The Atlantic countries had never stood lower nor the Soviet Union higher in the minds of politically conscious Africans." *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. New York: Fawcett Premier, 1971, p. 509.

<sup>589</sup> "The Abductors of Africa", Ghanaian Times, 11.01.1961, as quoted in TNA, DO 165/23, Keeble (Accra) to CRO, 01.02.1961.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>591</sup> See Mazrui, Ali Al'Amin, ed. *Africa's International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependency and Change*. Reprint. London: Heinemann, 1979, p. 159 ff.

<sup>592</sup> Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 538.

at least to relativize, the old Cold-War dogmas of the Eisenhower era, and meet the phenomenon of non-alignment with a positive spirit. The nationalist leaders of the nations of recent independence, even the more Western-critical, should be helped to tackle the challenges of development and nation building, with the long-term goal of strengthening the internal democratic structures of these countries as well as their political and economic ties with the West.<sup>593</sup>

While by 1961 Washington had given up on Castro, and in the following years did everything it could to undermine his regime and prevent the spread of the Cuban example to the rest of Latin America, trying to win back Africa's trust in the United States, and at the same time redress the negative view many Westerners held for Africa's neutralists, thus became one of the foreign policy objectives of the new administration. To a considerable extent, it was met by success — to the present day the Kennedy myth pays handsome dividends for the image of the United States in Africa.<sup>594</sup>

America's policy towards Africa under John Kennedy has been the object of debate ever since its inception. On the one hand, commentators paid tribute "to the admirable image of youthful vigor and progress conveyed by President Kennedy and his advisers, a valuable asset in Africa where the American image was tarnished," praising how, in 1961, "the enterprising Kennedy-Rusk-Williams team was able to make an auspicious beginning in giving American policy toward Africa a 'New Frontier' look."<sup>595</sup> Truly, from the outset Africa gained unprecedented attention under the Kennedy administration, a trend exemplified by the appointments the president made in key positions — one for all, the governor of Michigan, Mennen Williams, known for his battles on political, social and racial issues, as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, "even before he designated Dean Rusk Secretary of State."<sup>596</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> Ibid., p. 542.

<sup>594</sup> See Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 223-236.

<sup>595</sup> McKay, *Africa in World Politics*, p. 347-348.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid., p. 350.

The new regime made a number of significant symbolic gestures, such as the invitation of many African heads of state to the White House, whereas Eisenhower had only occasionally done so, or the “Africa to the Africans” speech given by Williams during one of his trips on the Black Continent, which brought him the hostility of the white supremacists but at the same time praise from the anti-colonialist camp.<sup>597</sup> It also promoted real change, among other vigorously supporting the United Nations’ effort to crush the Katangan secession, and taking for the first time sides with the Afro-Asians in the Security Council and the General Assembly, on such issues as apartheid in South Africa or Portugal’s colonial policy in Angola.<sup>598</sup> Moreover, Kennedy created the Peace Corps, which greatly contributed to show a more human side of the United States in the developing countries. And though he was not able to convince Congress to increase development aid for the Third World as much as he would have liked, Kennedy managed nonetheless to double the proportion of funds given to Africa on the total amount of federal development allocations.<sup>599</sup>

On the other hand, as of 1962 it became clear that other, more pressing commitments had pushed Africa down again on the list of Washington’s priorities. Although Kennedy’s warm personal style and his sincere concern for the fate of the poorer nations left a deep and lasting impression on both Africa’s leaders and peoples, it was possible to see how “the enthusiasm and interest of the Kennedy administration in Africa was, from an African viewpoint, a lovely but short-lived phenomenon,” as after some time “the United States returned essentially to the line of policy followed in the latter months by the Eisenhower administration,” courting the African nationalists and siding with them on matters of principle, “but not to the point of endangering existing security commitments” with its Western European and South African partners.<sup>600</sup> Generally there is agreement that “the only extended period

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<sup>597</sup> Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 512.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 537.

<sup>599</sup> Nielsen, Waldemar A. *The Great Powers and Africa*. New York: Praeger, 1969, p. 303.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302-304. See also Noer, Thomas. “New Frontiers and Old Priorities in Africa.” In *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, by Thomas G. Paterson, 253–83. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989.



during which American policy and African nationalist aspirations were reasonably well in balance was during the first year or so of the Kennedy administration”; after that time, the divergence of priorities between Washington, which focussed on the menace of communism, and the Africans, who saw instead “the real overriding issues” in (neo-)colonialism, racialism, and underdevelopment, brought the level of estrangement back to a significant level.<sup>601</sup>

## **Kennedy’s Approach to Ghana**

Ghana was chosen by Kennedy as the cornerstone of the new approach to Africa.<sup>602</sup> Impressed by Nkrumah’s personality and aware of the role Ghana had been cast into by the British, Kennedy considered that keeping it tied to the West was a top priority for winning the confrontation with the Soviets in Africa. Considering though the lights but also the shadows for the policy towards Africa of the United States in the Kennedy period as seen from an African point of view, it should come as no surprise that there were some ups and downs in the relations between the two countries in the period between 1961 and 1963 too.

In a significant part of the literature on Ghana’s foreign relations, the causes for the problems in the intercourse with the United States are often flatly laid at the door of Nkrumah and his inconsistent policy of “talking socialism” and criticizing imperialism while simultaneously trying to attract Western capital.<sup>603</sup> Even in one of the most recent studies on Kennedy’s ties with the leaders of the new African states, the picture which emerges at the end of the day is that of a US president acting in relation to Ghana’s head of state with wisdom and patience, whereas the latter mostly behaved like a spoiled child, expressing his ‘gratitude’ for America’s political and

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<sup>601</sup> Emerson, Rupert. *Africa and United States Policy*. London: Prentice-Hall International, 1967, p. 95-100.

<sup>602</sup> Cf. Noer, Thomas J., “The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project.” *Diplomatic History* 8, no. 1 (January 1984): 61–79. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1984.tb00401.x> [09.04.2016].

<sup>603</sup> Thompson argues that by the end of 1962, “Nkrumah increasingly perceived himself as Africa’s Castro, and Ghana as Africa’s Cuba, genuinely threatened by a great power and with a mission,” p. 270; “Ghana became, as a result, less and less objectively nonaligned, even if it remained subjectively committed to the policy,” *Ghana’s Foreign Policy* p. 280.

economic support with outbursts of gratuitous anti-Americanism.<sup>604</sup> But was Kennedy really the only one who invested political capital, time and patience in the relations between the United States and Ghana? Does all archival evidence and scholarly opinion support the view that the rapport between Kennedy and Nkrumah was essentially one between rationality and irrationality, between one cautious and enlightened leader on the one hand, and a eccentric autocrat with a nearly borderline personality on the other? Or is it possible that this narrative is vitiated by a Western viewpoint? The evidence presented in the following may not suffice to give a definitive answer to these questions, but I hope at least to instil some doubts in regard to what looks like established wisdom.

Nkrumah, like most other African leaders, with the election of John Kennedy as president hoped for a new beginning in African-American relations. In a letter written at the end January 1961, Ghana's president assured Kennedy that he was not blaming him for the wrongdoings of the past administration, "for whose actions you were nowhere responsible."<sup>605</sup> However, Nkrumah was bitterly disappointed when he learned that, despite his pleas to Kennedy and to the UN Secretary-General, Patrice Lumumba had been cold-bloodedly murdered by Katangan militias, with the complicity of the Belgians and (as was already then rumoured all over Africa) of the CIA.

What Nkrumah could not know at the time was that, in the moment when Kennedy officially began his mandate and received his letter, the former Congolese prime minister was already dead.<sup>606</sup> Some weeks of bitter recriminations and accusations in the Ghanaian press followed, until Nkrumah, due to deliver a speech in New York at the UN General Assembly on the Congo issue, received an invitation to come to Washington to meet the American president. The fact that Nkrumah was the first

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<sup>604</sup> "Up until the very end of his life," Muehlenbeck writes, "Kennedy was cautious in his dealings with Nkrumah, not knowing for sure what to make of the Ghanaian's behavior"; however, "despite the numerous obstacles that Nkrumah, Congress, even his own family put in his way, JFK persevered in maintaining relations with the Ghanaian leader because he understood that Nkrumah, no matter how mercurial and unpredictable he may have been, was the linchpin of his entire policy." Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 95-96.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>606</sup> See Kalb, *The Congo Cables*.

foreign head of state hosted at the White House by its new tenant, and the ceremonial honours he received — not mandatory for an unofficial visit — greatly contributed to create a positive impression of the new American administration to Ghana's leader.<sup>607</sup>

During the meeting on 8 March 1961, Nkrumah took — as he often did on these occasions — a conciliatory attitude and went “out of his way to minimize his differences of view with the United States position” on the Congo crisis. The two presidents were thus able to agree on a common position, which rested on the centrality of the UN role, the need to insulate the Congo from the Cold War, and the upholding of the country's unity against centrifugal forces.<sup>608</sup> Both leaders sought to explain their counterparts how their policies were often equivocated. Kennedy remarked that his Assistant Secretary Mennen Williams had been criticized by the colonialists for his “Africa for the Africans” comments, but still “had been given an unfriendly reception” also by the Nigerian press; Nkrumah for his part “made a particular plea to avoid confusing Communism and nationalism in Africa.”<sup>609</sup>

The informal part of the visit, during which the American president in private reassured his Ghanaian counterpart about his intentions on the Volta scheme, included meeting Mrs. Kennedy and the children, a gesture of confidence and courtesy which did not fail its effect on Nkrumah. It is interesting to remark how Jacqueline, who did not enjoy exercising a political role and presented herself as “a reluctant public figure,”<sup>610</sup> took part too, perhaps unwittingly, in her husband's courting offensive towards the Ghanaian leader. In a television interview after the visit the First Lady called Nkrumah “charming,” recalling how “he sat down and laughed and talked with us and told us about his own children”; then, in May, through the Ghanaian ambassador she sent him the following, handwritten letter:

Dear Mr President,

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<sup>607</sup> Mahoney, William P. "Nkrumah in retrospect." *The Review of Politics* 30.02 (1968): 246-250.

<sup>608</sup> The two leaders agreed on three points, in particular: “ (1) removal of Belgian military and para-military personnel, (2) neutralization of Congolese military forces and insulation of the Congo against outside influences and military supplies, and (3) freedom for the Congolese to work out their own political development.” FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 225, 08.03.1961.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.

<sup>610</sup> Leaming, Barbara. *Mrs. Kennedy: The Missing History of the Kennedy Years*. New York: Touchstone, 2002, p. 21.

Perhaps it is not done to write you this — but I have not asked anyone whether I should or not — so I hope this will reach you and you will be sympathetic to my request.

Could you please send us a picture of yourself? — with your signature on it. You were the very first head of state who came to visit us at the White House — I would so like to have a picture of everyone who does — but it will be a rather sorry display if our first and most charming visitor is not on among them.

I meant to ask you when we were all together upstairs that day — but my husband whisked you off so quickly!

It would be something wonderful for the President and I to have — we admire you so much — Sincerely Jacqueline Kennedy<sup>611</sup>

The skilful use of the personal relationship tactic, coupled with America's apparently changed attitude on colonial issues at the UN — in March the United States for the first time cast a vote in favour of an Afro-Asian resolution on the issue of Angola — did pay off, and no more negative comments on American imperialism were heard in Ghanaian media for some time. Secretary Williams paid a visit to Accra and was well received, while the South Atlantic Fleet impressed Ghana's population with the flagship "Hermitage" on display in the harbour of Tema.<sup>612</sup> Kennedy's Ambassador in Accra, the experienced diplomat Francis Russell, who in the 1940s had drafted the speech later known as the "Truman Doctrine,"<sup>613</sup> notified Washington the "upward turn in US-Ghana relations."<sup>614</sup> Then, in April, the Bay of Pigs affair came and the consequent setback in American-Third World relations.

Notwithstanding the sincere personal sympathy he held for Kennedy and his wife, Cuba seemed to confirm Nkrumah in his views about the danger of US-imperialism for the independence of the developing countries. He promptly sent a message to Fidel Castro, felicitating him for "his heroic resistance to colonialism, [...] the same danger threatening peace and security of Africa today."<sup>615</sup> So while in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs fiasco the Kennedy brothers, the CIA and the Pentagon became obsessed with the idea of ousting Castro and preventing the spread of Cuban-type

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<sup>611</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/113, letter dated 12.05.1961. In 1963, Sir Robert Jackson confirmed the high esteem in which Nkrumah held both the US president and his wife: "He nearly always mentions the two together," he said. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 94.

<sup>612</sup> PA AA, B34 236, 28.03.1961.

<sup>613</sup> "Francis Henry Russell; Author of Truman Doctrine." *Los Angeles Times*, 4 April 1989. [http://articles.latimes.com/1989-04-04/news/mn-812\\_1\\_truman-doctrine](http://articles.latimes.com/1989-04-04/news/mn-812_1_truman-doctrine) [02.09.2015].

<sup>614</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 81.

<sup>615</sup> Quoted in McKay, *Africa in World Politics*, p. 359.

revolutions to Latin America,<sup>616</sup> Nkrumah, who was not a revolutionary leader but surely had a non-aligned and anti-colonialist reputation to defend, became convinced that diminishing British influence by moving close instead to the United States could open the door to a more pernicious kind of neocolonialism, as well as undermine his standing among radical Africans.<sup>617</sup>

### **Playing with Fire: Nkrumah, Kennedy, and Khrushchev**

Considering that he had already met with two presidents of the United States in Washington, and that Ghana was preparing to receive a massive American investment for the Volta Project as well as the first contingent of Peace Corps volunteers, Nkrumah decided that the time was ripe to show the substance of Ghana's "positive neutrality," and set in motion preparations for an extended tour of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries, as a proof of his non-alignment, and with the hope to diversify the countries trade relations.<sup>618</sup>

Nkrumah used his expanded ties to the Soviet Union to pressure the United States, and to signalize Kennedy that he wanted him to 'get serious' on anti-colonialism and African issues. In April, Western intelligence spotted a shipment of Soviet arms being unloaded, in broad daylight and without any effort of concealment, in the harbour of Takoradi. The Americans suspected them being intended for the troops of Antoine Gizenga, Lumumba's former vice-prime minister in the Congo [see excursus]; the embassy submitted a formal protest to the Ghanaian government.<sup>619</sup> Nkrumah's reply to the embassy's note shows that, lacking in fact any concrete possibility to get large amounts of arms unnoticed to Gizenga, their purpose was probably more to put some heat upon the United States on the Congo issue:

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<sup>616</sup> For a recent contribution on this subject see, e.g., Bohning, Don. *The Castro Obsession: U.S. Covert Operations Against Cuba 1959-1965*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005.

<sup>617</sup> Also Muehlenbeck admits that there were risks for any politician in Africa at the time in supporting too directly the United States, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 219.

<sup>618</sup> Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 173-177. Cf. Bekori, E. Ofoe. "The United States Peace Corps as a Facet of United States-Ghana Relations." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 10 (Jan. 2012). <http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol4no10/4.10UnitedStates.pdf> [25.02.2016].

<sup>619</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/113, 17.04.1961.

My Government has no intention of prejudicing the success of United Nations' operations provided that these operations prove successful, bring peace to the Congo, exclude outside interference and effectively stop the flow of arms to warring factions.

Should, however, United Nations fail in its task, which includes arranging for the re-assembling of the Congo Parliament, the Ghana Government reserves the right to take such action as it may think appropriate.

[...] if the United Nations would effectively control the airports in the Congo, the action you suggest that the Ghana Government may be contemplating would be impossible, as would the shipment of arms to Tshombe and Kalonji or any other faction.<sup>620</sup>

Accra clearly overestimated its ability to keep at safe distance from Cold War dynamics and to increase its own international standing by exploiting the East-West competition. In the conspiracy-laden atmosphere of the Cold War, episodes like this were immediately interpreted as parts of a larger design waged by the opposing camp to undermine one's own policies. The State Department watched with anxiety the developments in Ghana, wondering about Nkrumah's ability to withstand Russian pressure, and speculated about the extent to which Moscow was trying to torpedo the agreement on the Volta River Project to create another Aswan episode.<sup>621</sup>

Internal dynamics mattered as much as foreign policy decisions in this game. On the one hand, there were those in Nkrumah's cabinet and entourage who thought that Ghana should go ahead with the Volta scheme only with Soviet help, and the Osagyefo was tempted to lend his ear to the leftists because they appeared to be less corrupt than the Western-friendly ministers of the party's right wing.<sup>622</sup> In this sense, a parallel could be drawn between Nkrumah and Mao Zedong, who, though of course from a much more radical point of view, was also "worried about the potential for bureaucratic stagnation and a loss of momentum" in the country he was trying to revolutionize, and "sought to mobilize his country behind a more radical policy abroad," leaning on the more extreme elements of the ruling party.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/113, undated. "The political obstructions to the supply line between Accra and Stanleyville owing to the refusal first of the Sudan, then (in 1964) of Kenya, to allow the passage across their territories of any aid outside the U.N. framework-meant that Ghana was actually able to fulfil few of its promises of material help." Mohan, "Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations," p. 405.

<sup>621</sup> TNA, FO 371/154801, Du Bulay (British Embassy in Washington) to Ewart-Biggs (Foreign Office), 16.05.1961.

<sup>622</sup> Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 166-167; cf. TNA, DO 195/10, "The Battle for Power", Snelling to Commonwealth Relations Office, 17.05.1961.

<sup>623</sup> Latham, Michael E. "The Cold War in the Third World, 1963-1975," in Leffler and Westad, p. 266.

In the United States on the other hand, in face of Nkrumah's apparent growing sympathies for the East, voices were getting louder that America should not waste its development money on this opportunist regime.<sup>624</sup> Against this, Britain's Prime Minister Macmillan, and influential advisers such as Barbara Ward, impressed upon Kennedy the idea that the Volta scheme was the best option to keep Ghana tied to the West and out of the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>625</sup> On the eve of Nkrumah's departure for the Eastern bloc countries, Kennedy finally resolved to write the Ghanaian president a letter in which he assured "that all major issues involved in negotiations for the United States Government's share of the financing of the dam and smelter have now been resolved," felicitating the Ghanaian government for the successful completion of this large-scale development project.<sup>626</sup>

Kennedy hoped that the support for the VRP would convince Ghana's president to tone down his anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist rhetoric. On the contrary, Kennedy's announcement probably convinced Nkrumah even more that in order not appear as a Western-aligned leader who had traded British colonialism for American neocolonialism, as a sign of its "positive neutralism," he needed to expand economic and political relations with the East, and show that on international issues which in itself marginally concerned Ghana, such as Berlin or nuclear disarmament, Ghana in fact supported the Soviet point of view.<sup>627</sup>

The fact that in August the United States failed to take a stand against the French military intervention in Bizerte, Tunisia, reinforced Ghana's perception that the United States needed to be kept under constant pressure, or it would fall back to the pro-European positions of the Eisenhower era.<sup>628</sup> Both presidents, Kennedy and

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<sup>624</sup> Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 527-528.

<sup>625</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 82.

<sup>626</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 227, Letter From President Kennedy to President Nkrumah, 29.06.1961.

<sup>627</sup> "A community of views was revealed in the course of the exchange of opinions on such highly important problems of our time as general and complete disarmament, the fight for peaceful coexistence, for the complete and earliest abolition of colonialism, for a settlement of controversial issues through negotiation, for the elimination of threats of international tension potentially dangerous to peace, for the consolidation of world peace and security." TNA, DO 195/6, Joint Soviet-Ghanaian Communiqué, 24.07.1961.

<sup>628</sup> "President Kennedy himself, who in 1957 had so slashingly attacked the American tendency to give lip service to self-determination but to side with the colonialists when the chips were down, made the decision in this instance that the

Nkrumah, were in point of fact playing an ambiguous and at times contradictory game; while their relationship had begun under the best auspices, now they were de facto undermining each other's respective policies. Nkrumah, taking for granted Kennedy's friendship, did not hesitate during his tour of the socialist countries, and also during the subsequent meeting of the neutralists in Belgrade, to prove a great embarrassment to the American leader, who had invested so much of his credibility in the new approach towards the non-aligned world. Nkrumah, as we have seen, even went so far as accepting the Kremlin's offer to host four hundred Ghanaian cadets for military training in the Soviet Union, a decision that caused alarm in Washington.<sup>629</sup>

Faced with the disappointing results of his courting offensive, when in September strikes broke out in Ghana, and rumours began spreading that there might be a coup d'état, Kennedy seemed to look forward to finding a more malleable dialogue partner in Accra. The US president told Under Secretary George Ball that he wanted to "hold up any final decision and announcement of the Volta project for Ghana," pending the outcome of the events.<sup>630</sup> Kennedy knew that the CIA was keeping in touch with Ghana's leading negotiator for the Volta Project, the former Minister of Finance Komla Gbedemah, whispering in his ear about the possibility of seizing power in Nkrumah's absence. William Mahoney, US Ambassador in Accra between 1962 and 1965, recalls that Gbedemah had received "official assurance of U.S. support in September 1961."<sup>631</sup>

Kennedy didn't want any direct involvement, and when the CIA proposed to intervene to topple Nkrumah, the president apparently "demurred."<sup>632</sup> Nonetheless, the position of the Kennedy administration towards the attempted coup d'état of

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United States should abstain out of deference to the delicate position of General de Gaulle in France, who was then trying to arrange a settlement of the Algerian issue." Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 289.

<sup>629</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 230, Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to President Kennedy, 13.09.1961.

<sup>630</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 229, Editorial Note; s. a. *ibid.*, Document 231, Memorandum From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to Secretary of State Rusk, 14.09.1961.

<sup>631</sup> Mahoney, J.F.K.: *Ordeal in Africa*, p. 172; cf. FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 230.

<sup>632</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 83. Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 215-216, claims instead that "the CIA found that Gbedemah backed off from the actual decision to stage a coup, and his plot was demolished anyway when a supporter telephoned the details to the United States on an open line which was tapped by the Ghana police. Both Gbedemah and the CIA were compromised by this gaffe and Gbedemah fled soon afterwards, in October 1961."



September 1961 in Ghana must still be considered ambiguous at least. If the coup failed, this happened because of Gbedemah's hesitation to take personal action, as well General Alexander's unwillingness to let British high officers in the Ghanaian armed forces to become entangled in internal power struggles.<sup>633</sup> To be sure, the Americans would not have disdained a more lenient and anti-communist leadership in Accra.

By the end of September it became clear that no regime change was forthcoming. In the subsequent weeks Nkrumah worsened even more his standing in the Western world by cracking down on the leaders of the opposition, whom the government accused of having fomented the strikes with the purpose of subversion.<sup>634</sup> Yet interestingly enough, though Nkrumah knew about Gbedemah's disloyalty and must have known as well about his contacts with the CIA, the white paper the Ghanaian government published in December on the strike and the conspiracy mentioned only the United Kingdom as one of those "outside forces which strongly opposed Ghana's policy of non-alignment and her campaign against imperialism, neocolonialism and minority rule on a racial basis," sparing the United States. Obviously Nkrumah didn't want to put further strain on the relations with Washington, which would have endangered the negotiations for the Volta Scheme.<sup>635</sup>

Kennedy realized at this point that there were no alternatives to Nkrumah in sight, but seemed to be increasingly disillusioned about the possibility to influence him. In the course of a conversation with Ball, on 21 September, the American president said Nkrumah had been "unnecessarily difficult with us, considering the effort we've really made about him." He seriously contemplated, as it seems, the possibility of pulling out from the Volta scheme, "then immediately commit a good percentage of the money to some other African countries. Then at least we wouldn't look like we had pulled the rug out of Africa — just Ghana."<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> See TNA, DO 195/64.

<sup>634</sup> Birmingham, Kwame Nkrumah, p. 76.

<sup>635</sup> TNA, DO 195/65, "Statement by the Government on the Recent Conspiracy", 11.12.1961.

<sup>636</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 232, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Kennedy and the Acting Under Secretary of State (Ball), 21.09.1961.

The US president reiterated his concerns about Ghana and the Volta project to Ball eight days later, when it was announced that Nkrumah had dismissed General Alexander, the Chief of Staff of Ghana's armed forces, in the course of an operation of "Africanization," but also as a reprisal against the role he suspected the British had had in the attempted coup.<sup>637</sup> In the end, as we have seen, the US president followed the advice of the majority of his advisers, who feared that "by the West's refusal to honor what is in his view a commitment to finance the Volta River project," Nkrumah would "react violently and turn even more to the Bloc."<sup>638</sup> On 14 December, Kennedy wrote to Nkrumah announcing him that, despite "the serious concern which the American people and Government have regarding certain political and economic policies of your Government," they had nonetheless decided to proceed with the project, as "an investment in the future generations of the Ghanaians and their African neighbors."<sup>639</sup>

### **The Return to Normalcy of the Best and Brightest**

Had Kennedy really given up on Nkrumah? Had their entente cordiale failed to outlive the first half of 1961? To be sure, after the summer and Nkrumah's trip to the East, though he remained interested in Ghana, the US president began having doubts about Nkrumah's non-alignment. For his part, Nkrumah learned that Kennedy's powers to bring about change in the foreign policy of the United States were not unlimited, and put the American president, as opposed to the capitalist-imperialist system as a whole, in two of the famous "sealed compartments" of his brain.<sup>640</sup> This reflected Nkrumah's personality, but also the fact that, as American analysts admitted, the substance of United States policy in Africa had not changed as much as one could have expected at the outset of the new administration:

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<sup>637</sup> Ibid., Document 234, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between President Kennedy and the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Ball), 29.09.1961.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid., Document 238, Special National Intelligence Estimate, 16.11.1961.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid., Document 242, Letter From President Kennedy to President Nkrumah, 14.12.1961.

<sup>640</sup> The paternity of the metaphor belongs to Robert Jackson, see Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 171.

Within the short span of twelve months, most of the high hopes and expectations entertained by Africans and pro-African elements in the United States had run aground on the hard realities of the cold war, conservatism, and cost. Although a new and warmer atmosphere of African-American relationships had been created, in the substance of African policy under President Kennedy there was less change than met the eye. The appearance was greater than reality.<sup>641</sup>

The writing on the wall of this “return to normalcy” came in December 1961, when the United States took a severe stand against the Indian invasion of the Portuguese enclave in Goa, which on the contrary the Afro-Asians at the UN viewed as the elimination of a “dangerous and irritating anachronism.”<sup>642</sup> America’s movement back to a more conservative line on colonial and African issues went on during 1962, as it opposed mandatory sanctions against South Africa, and chose not to put any pressure on its British ally on the question of its Rhodesian colony, where a white minority regime refused to abide by worldwide pleas to accept free elections without racial discriminations.<sup>643</sup>

Despite the conservative turn the Kennedy administration began to take on Third World issues as of 1962, the better personal relationship President Kennedy had established with Africa’s nationalist leaders did pay off during the Cuban Missile Crisis. All African states asked to do so by the United States denied the Soviet Union, which was trying to organize an airlift to Cuba, overflight rights or the use of their airport facilities, including the very structures the Soviet themselves had just built, as in the case of Guinea.<sup>644</sup>

Nkrumah, wary of America’s Cuba policy after the Bay of Pigs, initially dragged his feet against the requests of the new US Ambassador Mahoney. Ghana denounced the quarantine of Cuba at the United Nations, much to Kennedy’s distress. As he was shown the pictures of the Soviet missile installations taken over Cuba, and realized that the Russians had lied to the non-aligned world as well, Nkrumah finally gave in. From that moment on, sincerely worried that the situation might degenerate into World War III, Nkrumah denied all use of Ghana’s airfields to Soviet aircraft for the

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<sup>641</sup> Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 291.

<sup>642</sup> McKay, *Africa in World Politics*, p. 360.

<sup>643</sup> Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 291-292.

<sup>644</sup> See Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 213-222; also Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 745-746.

duration of the crisis, and joined the condemnation for Moscow's provocative behaviour.<sup>645</sup>

Nonetheless, in the immediate aftermath of the Missile Crisis, a clearly irritated Kennedy requested a review of US policy towards Ghana, raising the question of how to respond to Nkrumah's attitude.<sup>646</sup> A memorandum prepared by Carl Kaysen, Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, revealed that in fact, beneath the surface of vocal anti-imperialism, in Ghana still lay a hard core of Western-friendliness given by historic ties to Western Europe as well as by the consciousness that the country's economic future rested on private investment and trade with the capitalist nations. Kaysen cited the new foreign capital investment legislation, as well as the recent appointment of pro-Western figures in key financial positions, as encouraging "current developments on the economic front in Ghana."<sup>647</sup>

Also Chad Calhoun, vice-president of Kaiser Corporation, came back from Ghana praising the progress of the VRP works, while Ambassador Mahoney had managed to establish a quite constructive relationship with Nkrumah. In the end, the memorandum recommended a soft line:

There are signs that Nkrumah is turning away from the Bloc and that his neutralism is moving from neutralism against us to neutralism for us. Just because has been vociferous and virulent in his previous stand, the gains to us of a permanent change in his attitude will be large. If Nkrumah joins Toure among those who are visibly and publicly disillusioned with the results of close political alignment with, and heavy economic dependence on, the Bloc, this will be a significant gain for the U.S., not only in Africa, but more broadly. At this moment, when Nkrumah is making at least some moves in directions favorable to us, his political situation is fluid, and when the ultimate results are in doubt, it would be unwise to apply pressures on him that might well cause him to return to his previous pro-Soviet orientation. Finally, at a moment when we have won a significant victory in the world political struggle we should show a position of generosity in relation to small neutrals, even those who have been more neutral with respect to the Soviet Union than they have with respect to us.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> Ibid., p. 217-218. According to Mazrui, the fact that "Khrushchev capitulated to Kennedy's demands with little pretence at consultations with Castro" strengthened the non-aligned principle, as it proved Africa's non-aligned "a warning against allowing itself to be used in a global nuclear strategy by one of the big powers," Africa's International Relations, p. 160.

<sup>646</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 247, Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kaysen) to President Kennedy, 29.10.1962.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

So there were no reprisals by the United States for the criticisms voiced by Ghana during the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, while Washington expressed gratitude to all African governments which had cooperated in the impediment of the Soviet airlift with increased shares of aid, Ghana got no extra money.<sup>649</sup> This was probably due, apart from the fact that Ghana was already the recipient of the largest single US foreign investment in Africa of the time, to Kennedy's personal irritation for Nkrumah's behaviour.

### **Kennedy and the Ghanaian Puzzle**

Despite everything, Kennedy still believed that the Ghana experiment could be put to the use of the West. He had a clear difficulty in understanding Ghana though, which was also due to the contradictory information he was receiving by the State Department. Looking at the telegram sent to a number of diplomatic posts in Africa in December 1962 to gather some opinions on Nkrumah and his policy by the other African governments, one cannot fail to notice the stark contrast between the premises of the telegram, and the conclusions reached by Kaysen's memorandum only two months before:

*Since attempt on Nkrumah's life last August developments in Ghana have followed trend that appears unfavorable to US and Western interests generally [italics added]. Situation reflects increasing importance assumed by anti-Western left-wing elements in Nkrumah's entourage and in leading positions Ghanaian information media. There have been violent press attacks against our Ambassador, Peace Corps and press allegations that official and other Americans in Ghana are involved in CIA plot against the regime. Policies of US and those of West have been subject unbridled press criticism and charges of neo-colonialism and imperialism. On other hand Ghanaian press has been lavish in praise Soviet Union and Ghanaian delegation in UN has shown distinct preference for communist bloc positions. UK and US have been criticized by Ghana for responding India's request assistance repel ChiCom [Chinese Communist] aggression and GOG [Government of Ghana] has shown marked inclination favor ChiCom negotiating proposals. Because of uncertainties outlook Ghana including emotional impact on Nkrumah of use of violence against him Dept would find it helpful have views responsible African leaders.*<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>649</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 221.

<sup>650</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 248, Circular Telegram From the Department of State to Certain African Posts, 17.12.1962.

While Kaysen, the national security expert, considered that Ghana was in fact “turning away from the Bloc,” the State Department reasoned in terms of how to contrast Nkrumah’s apparently inexorable drift towards the Soviet Union and China — no wonder Kennedy himself was puzzled about what was going on in Ghana.

In January, 1963, an intense period of reassessment of the relations between the two governments began. Nkrumah wrote Kennedy “a long personal letter,” in which he gave his support to nuclear disarmament, pleaded once again to keep the Cold War out of Africa, and stressed that the only way he saw for Ghana to get out of underdevelopment was to industrialize and stop being mere exporters of raw materials.<sup>651</sup> On his part, Kennedy delivered Nkrumah a message through Edgard Kaiser; Nkrumah’s reply shows how much Kennedy’s warm and frank personal style impressed upon Ghana’s leader, and helped to smooth the recurring asperities in their intercourse:

Dear Mr. President,

I wish to thank you most sincerely for your kind message which has been delivered to me personally by Mr. Edgard Kaiser.

I would like you to know how touched and moved I was by the warmth and sincerity which the contents of your message conveyed. I am deeply grateful to you for the assurance of your appreciation of our difficulties at the present time. I, too, appreciate your own difficulties and the stand you have taken and the views you have expressed on account of these. It is clear that both our countries are passing through trying times and I know that neither you nor I would wish to do anything which might add to our problems.<sup>652</sup>

After receiving Nkrumah’s reply, Kennedy held a meeting with Kaiser, Calhoun and Kaysen to discuss the issue of Ghana.<sup>653</sup> Although he regularly read all the reports from Mahoney, the US president still could not make sense of Nkrumah’s behaviour. Kennedy said “he could understand his trying to deal with both the U.S. and the Soviet Union,” but not “the lack of subtlety and balance. Why did Nkrumah lean so hard against us if he thought continuing relations was not of any use to him?” Kaiser answers pointed basically to what he considered Nkrumah’s weak character,

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<sup>651</sup> Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 226.

<sup>652</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/332, letter, 21.01.1963.

<sup>653</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 249, Memorandum by the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kaysen), 24.01.1963.

that is, his inability to withstand pressure from his left-wing advisers, as well as the desire to please the Soviet ambassador and other Eastern bloc diplomats, who often came to visit him. This, on the other hand, always left the chances open to redress the situation — if Nkrumah was as wavering as all Western observers remarked, he could still be influenced by the West too. That is why Kaiser, who frequently paid visits to Ghana himself along with his vice Calhoun, suggested Kennedy to keep at his epistolary exchange with Nkrumah, while Mahoney should be encouraged to search a “more intimate contact” with the Osagyefo.<sup>654</sup>

To be sure, Nkrumah had become warier about the United States’ intentions, because he believed the CIA was “out to get him”; he requested the removal of two functionaries from the US embassy, suspected of subversive activities.<sup>655</sup> This kind of allegations were seldom supported by hard evidence; they have ever since mostly been dismissed as “paranoia” of an increasingly isolated dictator, who during his rule was the target of various assassination attempts, and often tended to comfortably put the blame on foreign hostile powers to conceal the increasing internal opposition to his regime.<sup>656</sup>

On the other hand, we know today that the CIA did in fact keep in touch with Nkrumah’s domestic and foreign enemies over all his presidency, and as we have seen, already in 1961 had declared itself ready to organize a coup against the Ghanaian leader.<sup>657</sup> Considering that nobody denies anymore that the Agency, “if not actively involved in planning the coup [of 1966], at the very least had knowledge of the plan and failed to warn Nkrumah,”<sup>658</sup> it would be only fair to acknowledge that, though he overestimated the subversive threat of the CIA and took at face value unreliable information on its activities, Nkrumah’s irritation with the duplicity of the United States was often as justified as was Kennedy’s displeasure for the vagaries of the Ghanaians.

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<sup>654</sup> Ibid.

<sup>655</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 91.

<sup>656</sup> Rooney, *The Political kingdom*, p. 228.

<sup>657</sup> Mahoney apparently was furious when he discovered that Joseph Danquah, one of the most prominent opponents of Nkrumah, had been put on the CIA’s payroll, see Rahman, *The Regime Change of Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 223.

<sup>658</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 96.

In any case, maintaining relations on a relatively constructive level was in the interest of both countries, which were now tied by a large-scale economic undertaking in the form of the VRP. In a letter dated 7 February 1963 Kennedy reassured Nkrumah that on “the question of what particular economic and social arrangements are best suited to development [...] each country is the best judge of its own institutions,” and that the United States had “no desire to impose our own views on these matters on any other government, nor do we believe that what works well in the United States always works equally well elsewhere.”<sup>659</sup>

Thanks to his sensitivity and the personal interest he took in African matters, Kennedy was able to keep the communication line open even with difficult partners like Nkrumah, despite the fact that the State Department, considering that Ghana’s influence in Africa was on the descending side, recommended a policy of “aloofness,” at least as long as it insisted on Western-critical rhetoric in the press and at the UN level.<sup>660</sup>

It is true that in this period the State Department began consulting with various African countries on how to counter Ghana’s policy of “subversion” against more conservative regimes, especially in its immediate neighbourhood.<sup>661</sup> Nonetheless, for Kennedy it was now a question of internal credibility; as he told the new Ghanaian ambassador in Washington, “he had taken the decision to go ahead with the Volta River Project in face of considerable opposition in the Senate and elsewhere,” and now the “critics of US decision to undertake heavy commitments in Ghana” had to “be proven wrong.”<sup>662</sup>

In his decision to support the Volta Scheme and tolerate to a certain extent Accra’s anti-imperialist attitude, Kennedy was comforted by a well-informed observer of Ghanaian events like Sir Jackson who, asked for advice on how to handle Ghana’s

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<sup>659</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 250, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 07.02.1963

<sup>660</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 93.

<sup>661</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 244, Ghanaian Subversion In Africa, Paper Prepared in the Office of West Coast and Malian Affairs, 12.02.1962.

<sup>662</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 251, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 26.04.1963,



president, reaffirmed once again that Nkrumah was not “actively anti-West,” that “Ghana’s bark (mainly the local press) is Eastern, but its real bite (in terms of economic facts) is strongly Western,” and that he was confident the Volta Project would in the end turn out as “a Western showpiece for most of the other African states simply by its size and by its successful construction.”<sup>663</sup>

Jackson’s words echoed in the last reports Kennedy received on Ghana before his assassination. A State Department memorandum on the VRP resumed that, although “adverse factors” such as communist influence and anti-American attitudes in the press remained, the situation had “somewhat improved”: the Volta project — “serving well its political purpose” — was proceeding according to plans, while Nkrumah had cordial relations with Kaiser and Mahoney, and the climate for foreign investment was more favourable thanks to the new legislation.<sup>664</sup>

Mahoney confirmed, in a telephone conversation with Kennedy few days before Dallas, that “although we could expect further trouble and perhaps increased Bloc penetration, Ghana was a good bet in the long haul because of its many Western institutions and traditions.” Asked by the president about Nkrumah’s personality and his Marxist tendencies, Mahoney played down too the Ghanaian leader’s ideological beliefs, and highlighted instead his character weaknesses, stating that in his view Nkrumah was “a badly confused and immature person who is not quite sure of what he wants except that he wants to lead all of Africa” and suggested that the United States “learned to live with him.”<sup>665</sup>

Nkrumah, for his part, though he was disappointed when the United States at the UN failed to support mandatory sanctions against South Africa, or a worldwide ban on the supply of arms which might be employed in Portugal’s colonies,<sup>666</sup> reacted with enthusiasm to what was then called “the negro revolution” in the United States, and

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<sup>663</sup> Quoted in Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 93-94.

<sup>664</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 252, Memorandum From the Department of State Executive Secretary (Brubeck) to President Kennedy, 30.10.1963.

<sup>665</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 253, Memorandum of Conversation, 19.11.1963.

<sup>666</sup> According to Nielsen, in the case of the arms ban against Portugal, “the United States put itself in the curious position of refusing to vote for a resolution asking all the members of the United Nations to do what the United States, according to its own statement [which declared that the United States had “prohibited direct export of arms and military equipment to the Portuguese territories”], had already put into effect.” *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 295.

to Kennedy's support for the civil rights movement.<sup>667</sup> Though he never saw Kennedy or his wife again after 1961, he remained close to the vicissitudes of the Kennedy family, and promptly expressed his condolences when Jacqueline's prematurely-born baby died in hospital at the end of August 1963.

Kennedy's death probably shocked him as much, if not more, as Lumumba's assassination.<sup>668</sup> He mourned Kennedy as if he had lost a personal friend, like many ordinary people did. Schools were closed, flags flown at half mast, a memorial service was offered at the Holy Spirit Cathedral in downtown Accra, and hundreds of Ghanaians wrote in the book of condolences at the American embassy.<sup>669</sup> Nkrumah, appalled to learn "that an incident like that can happen in twentieth century America,"<sup>670</sup> in a tribute aired on Radio Ghana hinted at a racist background of the assassination:

John Kennedy's achievements in international affairs have been remarkable. We in Africa will remember him, above all, for his uncompromising stand against racial and religious bigotry, intolerance and injustice. His courage and steadfastness in pursuing the objectives of racial equality in his own country will always remain as his greatest contribution to the struggle against racialism and racial arrogance. His singleness of purpose toward these objectives may have been a cause of this ignominious assassination. Whatever the cause, I am convinced that the supreme sacrifice which he was called upon to make, will not be lost on those sections of American society whose outmoded attitudes and prejudices constitute a blot on the American image.

By his death, the world has witnessed the evil manoeuvres of imperialism, capitalism and racialism. Let us hope that John Kennedy's death will shame the racist and reactionary bigots in America into a more enlightened outlook on the problems of peace and social injustice.<sup>671</sup>

Kennedy was the last American president who believed in the value of the Ghana experiment for the pursuit of its own African policy goals. Lyndon Johnson assured Nkrumah as he took over the presidency that he fully shared "Kennedy's sympathy for African aspirations."<sup>672</sup> However, thereafter the relations between Ghana and the United States steadily deteriorated, for personality reasons, but mostly because of the

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<sup>667</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 95; cf. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 867-892.

<sup>668</sup> When Mahoney, asked by Ghana's president whether there was anything he could do, answered "say a Hail Mary," Nkrumah replied: "I'm already on my knees." Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 229.

<sup>669</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/332, Mrs. Kennedy to Nkrumah, 23.01.1964.

<sup>670</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/2/152, Nkrumah to Mahoney, 23.11.1963.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*, Tribute The Late President John F. Kennedy, 25.11.1963. The belief Kennedy's assassination was racially motivated was widespread in Africa, see Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 227.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, Johnson to Nkrumah, n.d.

different approach the Johnson administration took on Third World matters, which collided with Nkrumah's activist foreign policy.

## **2.4 The Johnson Administration, Ghana, and the Coup**

### **Johnson and Africa: The End of the Entente?**

Scholars and analysts have traditionally agreed in considering that President Lyndon B. Johnson did not follow up on Kennedy's close interest in African affairs. According to the most common reconstruction, Johnson's lack of enthusiasm in pursuing the rapport his predecessor had established with the nationalist leaders reverberated immediately across Africa, and was pivotal in bringing about a deterioration of US-African relations as of 1964. Thompson, in his investigation of Ghanaian foreign policy, considered that

Buried with Kennedy was America's Africa policy. If the change were not immediately felt in Washington, it certainly was in Accra. Against the judgement of numerous diplomats and advisers, Kennedy had charted a dynamic and admired course for America in Africa, and with Kennedy gone there was no one to advocate what was in any event an unpopular cause. His successor was a man who particularly disliked courting or even appreciating the sensibilities of leaders of small states with whom America had policy disagreements.<sup>673</sup>

These words resonate in more recent studies. According to Muehlenbeck, the entente cordiale "that had developed between the United States and many of the leaders of Africa" died with Kennedy, as "during LBJ's presidency the level of American aid to Africa quickly dropped because the new president had little personal interest in the continent and quickly became preoccupied with the Vietnam War". The new president's attitude towards Africa is thus supposedly exemplified by the question Johnson asked his Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Averell Harriman, in regard to Ghana: "Tell me, Av, what's the goddam name of that place?"<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 300-301.

<sup>674</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 231.

Seen in this perspective, Johnson's presidency was not so much the continuation of Kennedy's policy towards Africa, as the former had promised entering the White House, rather the beginning of a policy of neglect that was later carried on by his successors, which contributed to "the deteriorating image of the United States in the developing world":

After Kennedy's death Washington became increasingly obsessed about the Cold War, turning its back on nationalist movements in the developing world and instead choosing to support autocratic dictators and fund destructive proxy wars. This caused many of the same people who had once held Kennedy, and by extension the United States, in such high esteem to begin to chafe at Washington's neglect for their plight.<sup>675</sup>

Other authors have tried to give a more nuanced picture of the policy towards Africa under Johnson. Nielsen, for example, praised the "skilful and constructive fashion" in which his administration tackled three thorny issues concerning Africa in the course of 1966, namely (1) the establishment of cordial relations with the military regime in Ghana after the coup d'état of February 1966; (2) the decision to side with the Africans for the removal of South Africa's UN mandate over South West Africa (today's Namibia); and (3) the vote in favour of the Security Council resolution imposing mandatory sanctions against the rebellious British colony of Rhodesia.<sup>676</sup> Nonetheless, as an overall judgement, these actions are deemed just "a few brilliant strokes" in the course of a "declining curve of relationships."<sup>677</sup>

In more recent years however, in a clearly revisionist essay, one author has even gone so far as to claiming that Johnson's policy towards Africa was in fact "thoughtful, pragmatic, and effective," and in many respects superior to that of Kennedy.<sup>678</sup> In Lerner's view, while "Kennedy's policies towards Africa were not much different from those he followed towards African-Americans at home: positive rhetoric and symbolic actions but little of real substance," the Johnson Administration, after a few months of initial hesitation, "actually embarked on a quiet

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<sup>675</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>676</sup> Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 314-320.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., p. 305, 314.

<sup>678</sup> Lerner, Mitch. "Climbing off the Back Burner: Lyndon Johnson's Soft Power Approach to Africa." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 22, no. 4 (Dec. 2011): p. 578-607, here p. 602. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2011.625809> [11.09.2015].

African programme rooted in American cultural and economic power that proved to be more successful than is generally believed.”<sup>679</sup>

In point of fact, even giving Johnson’s “soft power approach” the benefit of the doubt, and suspending the judgement about whose Africa policy, Kennedy’s or Johnson’s, was the more effective in each given circumstance, examining more closely the twenty five months in which Johnson and Nkrumah had to deal with each other, it seems clear that none of the two above presented views of L.B.J.’s approach to Africa is particularly helpful in understanding the role of the United States in the last phase of the CPP regime in Ghana.

As we will see, the Johnson administration after a first attempt to keep at Kennedy’s pragmatic approach put in place a policy of “aloofness” towards the increasingly intractable regime in Accra, behind which was concealed the effort to bring about, in coordination with the United Kingdom and assisted by the services of the CIA, the downfall of Nkrumah. In this sense, Johnson’s approach to Ghana fits best the Cold-War centred analysis made by Latham, according to which, while Kennedy favoured long-term political and economic investments in modernization programs in the Third World, “by the mid-1960s US policymakers concluded that the immediate preservation of anti-Communist order required a much more direct approach.”<sup>680</sup>

## **Nkrumah and the Spectre of the CIA**

The Johnson administration had inherited Kennedy’s gamble of keeping Ghana West-oriented by the Volta scheme. The works on the dam were heading forward speedily, although now in 1964 the first real disbursements had to be made by the United States for the construction of the smelter in Tema. America’s commitment could thus still be the object of political controversy at Congress level, where the

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<sup>679</sup> Ibid., p. 579-581.

<sup>680</sup> Latham, “The Cold War in the Third World, 1963-1975,” in Leffler and Westad, p. 272.

mood had never been favourable towards foreign aid, especially for politically dubious countries.

To be sure, keeping in good terms with Accra against mounting domestic opposition became increasingly difficult for the White House and the State Department when, as of December 1963, Nkrumah began formalizing the transformation of Ghana into a Marxist-type dictatorship.<sup>681</sup> When on 2 January 1964 another assassination attempt was perpetrated on Nkrumah — the second in eighteen months — by one of his bodyguards, Secretary of State Rusk told Williams that they “should be prepared to react vigorously” if Ghana began blaming the United States for the attack, while from the embassy in Accra Mahoney suggested he should be recalled for consultations in case of problems.<sup>682</sup> Other advisers were more cautious though, recalling that if they got “in an escalating fight” with Nkrumah, they could find themselves “in an election year caught between a political fight on Volta at home and the alternative of an Aswan Dam fiasco in Ghana.”<sup>683</sup>

The Ghanaian press in fact did not blame specifically the CIA for the failed attempt; the top echelons of the police were purged instead. Nonetheless, the situation created by the attack was, as seen from Washington and London, very serious, as by that moment the president’s personal security passed entirely into the hands of the Russian-trained Presidential Guard, while Nkrumah, shocked, badly frightened, and more than ever convinced that the CIA was plotting to have him ousted, began to rely even more on the advice of Rodionov, the Soviet Ambassador — known to be a KGB officer.<sup>684</sup> Suspicious about America, Nkrumah refused to see Mahoney, while the

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<sup>681</sup> In the New Year’s Eve radio address to the nation he announced a referendum, to be held in January, on a constitutional reform which would allow him to remove at his discretion the judges of the Supreme Court and establish at the same time the CPP as the only legal political party, constitutionalizing the goal of socialism. TNA, DO 195/209, Cole to Sandys, 16.01.1963 [sic]. Cf. Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, p. 324-330; Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, p. 304 ff.

<sup>682</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 235, Memorandum From William H. Brubeck of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), 03.01.1964.

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>684</sup> TNA, CAB 21/6007, “Communist Subversion In Africa”, April 1964. This would be consistent with the interest the KGB showed in the Third World as opposed to the career diplomats of the Soviet Union, see Andrew, Christopher. “Intelligence in the Cold War.” In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 417–37. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.

delegation from the People's Republic of China led by premier Chou En-Lai stayed for four days in Accra and was received with all honours.<sup>685</sup>

### **America, the Russians, and the Demonstrators**

In the overheated atmosphere created by the attempt and the upcoming referendum on the constitutional reform, something happened at last which brought the situation out of control. On the night of 31 January 1964 rumours spread in Ghana of a possible military coup d'état.<sup>686</sup> Five days later a group of CPP militants gathered outside the US embassy to protest against what they perceived as the source of these rumours. The demonstrators began chanting anti-American slogans and hurling stones at the building, then they tore down the American flag, which a brave African-American employee pulled up again in front of the crowd.<sup>687</sup> The editor of the *Ghanaian Times*, considered the mouthpiece of the government, threatened the United States with violent retaliation for what they had done to "the people in Korea and Germany, in Cuba and Panama."<sup>688</sup>

The US government was bewildered at this outburst of anti-Americanism; State Department officials were quoted in the press as saying "that nothing has occurred in recent relations between Washington and Accra that would explain yesterday's organized march of Ghanaians against the United States Embassy or the virulent attacks now appearing in the Government-controlled press." Though the Ghanaian government officially denied involvement in the protest, Mahoney, as planned, was recalled to Washington.<sup>689</sup> The crisis was made worse when, a few days later, four American professors were dismissed from their posts at the Legon University under the suspicion of being secret agents.<sup>690</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> S. PRAAD, ADM 16/50.

<sup>686</sup> Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 241.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*, RG 17/1/420, Hearings Before A Subcommittee Of The Committee On Appropriations, 29.04.1964.

<sup>688</sup> Quoted in Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 302.

<sup>689</sup> *The Times*, "U.S. Withdrawing Its Ambassador", 06.02.1964.

<sup>690</sup> Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 241.

Many saw now in Nkrumah a man seriously shaken by two attempts on his life within one year and a half, an autocrat increasingly isolated from his people, surrounded by advisers who nurtured for their own purposes his belief that the CIA, after having eliminated Lumumba, Hammarskjöld, Diêm in South Vietnam and J.F.K., was now plotting to have him killed as well. One of the few Americans who never lost faith in the mental sanity of Ghana's supreme leader was Chad Calhoun. Right after the demonstrations at the US embassy, Kaiser's number two wrote Nkrumah a letter to reassure him about "the deep concern by United States authorities about your personal safety, welfare and well-being," and remind him how easily this kind of episodes could be utilized by enemies of the United States' foreign aid program.<sup>691</sup> Nkrumah surely appreciated the hand-written, confidential missive.<sup>692</sup> His reply shows though how deep-rooted his anguish about the CIA's activities was:

[...] I am surprised that in all the careful analysis you made of the difficulties that have arisen, you made no reference whatever to the United States' Central Intelligence Agency, which, in my view, is doing so much harm to the image of the United States in Africa and elsewhere.

*The CIA seems to be a very sinister organisation* [italics added] devoted exclusively to mischievous interference in the internal affairs of the less-developed countries in Africa. It makes no secret of its activities in the Congo and boasts from the roof-tops about its active participation in the recent South Vietnam coups [sic] d'état [...] The role the CIA is playing in the Congo, and the difficulties and confusion it is creating there, does not reflect any credit upon the Government of the United States. [...]

Throughout Africa there seems to be two rival establishments representing the United States. There is the regular diplomatic service on the one hand, and the CIA on the other. Very often the Embassy does not know what the CIA is doing and would disapprove of it if it did. [...]

I am sure you will agree that no one, especially in the developing countries in Africa, can tolerate the persistent interference of the CIA in the internal affairs of the African States by the use of corrupt and ambitious self-seekers who have no following in their own country.<sup>693</sup>

Nkrumah's worries were probably exaggerated in his particular case, yet by no means airy-fairy. As also Kennedy's "Best and Brightest" had been able verify once they were inside the control room of power, in the early 1960s

Cuba and Laos had already provided the new administration with horrible examples of the readiness of CIA operatives in the field to go off on policies of their own. This was only the most spectacular expression of the steady growth of the CIA in the 1950s. The CIA's budget now exceeded State's by more than 50 per cent. [...] Its staff had doubled in a decade. In some areas

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<sup>691</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/326, Calhoun to Nkrumah, 05.02.1964.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid., Nkrumah to Calhoun, 15.02.1964.

<sup>693</sup> Ibid.



the CIA had outstripped the State Department in the quality of its personnel. [...] Often the CIA station chief had been in the country longer than the ambassador, had more money at his disposal and exerted more influence [...] Moreover, the CIA declined to clear its clandestine intelligence operations either with the State Department in Washington or with the ambassador in the field; and while covert political operations were cleared with State, this was sometimes done, not at the start, but after the operation had almost reached the point beyond which it could not easily be recalled.<sup>694</sup>

One further episode of political unrest took place in those weeks, not in Ghana but in Russia, which has never been brought in connection so far with the anti-American demonstrations in Accra of early February 1964, yet might have had its weight in that agitated period. About six weeks before, on 19 December, international newspapers had reported about the first political protest staged on Moscow's Red Square since the 1920s by a group of some five to seven hundred African students, many Ghanaians among them, carrying placards with slogans such as "Stop killing Africans!" and "Moscow, a second Alabama."<sup>695</sup>

The Africans protested against the death of a colleague of theirs, a Ghanaian medical student named Edmund Assare-Addo, whose body had been found in the middle of nowhere outside of Moscow some days before. While Soviet authorities quickly filed the case as alcohol-related hypothermia, the students insisted that Assare-Addo had been killed by racist Russians because he intended to marry his Russian girlfriend. The episode of the protesting African students, who managed in the end to obtain a meeting with high ministerial officials to present their grievances, proved a remarkable embarrassment for Moscow, as it put the finger on a sore point of the relations between the Soviet Union and the Third World, namely the xenophobia lingering in Soviet society beneath the official political progressiveness and support for African nationalism. However, it became embarrassing for Nkrumah as well, as it took place right at a time when Ghana had officially (though not

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<sup>694</sup> Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 395-396. Cf. Lemarchand, René. "The CIA in Africa: How Central? How Intelligent?" In *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa*, edited by Ray, Ellen, William Schaap, Karl Van Meter, and Louis Wolf, 9-23. London: Zed Press, 1980.

<sup>695</sup> Hessler, Julie. "Death of an African Student in Moscow." *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* Vol 47, no. 1 (June 1, 2006): 33-63. [http://www.cairn.info/resume.php?ID\\_ARTICLE=CMR\\_471\\_0033](http://www.cairn.info/resume.php?ID_ARTICLE=CMR_471_0033) [17.09.2015].

practically) adopted “scientific socialism” as leading ideological principle, and, in general, closer ties to the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc.<sup>696</sup>

Might Nkrumah, in the wake of the January attempt, have yielded to pressure on the part of Ambassador Rodionov, who got very close to him in that period, to authorize the anti-American march, as a way to redress the bad impression caused by the Moscow protest? Did the Soviets — who in a Cold-War perspective surely had enough reasons to foster animosity against American imperialism — hope this would cast an equal and contrary shadow on US Third World policy? Mahoney reported that the only moment when Nkrumah got “riled” during a discussion the two had on 2 March was when the ambassador mentioned “the African student incident in Moscow,” which naturally had been censored by Ghana’s press.<sup>697</sup>

According to Rooney, “several well-known members of the Russian community” in Accra were behind the demonstration; the temporal closeness of the two episodes, and the fact that Nkrumah had clearly been embarrassed by the behaviour of Ghana’s students in Moscow, suggest indeed a correlation.<sup>698</sup> To be sure, it would add some sense to Nkrumah’s otherwise on a rational level hardly explicable behaviour, considering that Ghana was about to launch its Seven Year Development Plan, which required to succeed substantial Western investment.

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<sup>696</sup> Assare-Addo, enrolled in the university of Kalinin, was in fact on his way to Moscow to join a gathering summoned by the Ghanaian embassy at the time he was killed. Hessler suggests hypothetically, on the basis of inconclusive Soviet archival documents, that the meeting might have been part of a strategy to divert Ghana’s student from the Soviet-sponsored associations to the Pan-African student union promoted by Accra, a plan scrapped, while the students were already on their way, when Nkrumah decided to move closer to the Soviet Union at the ideological and political level. *Ibid.*, p. 30 ff.

<sup>697</sup> “He commented that he was planning to maintain closer control over students in Soviet Bloc countries and described mission he has sent to set up CPP branch parties among students in Bloc. [He] emphasized this will give him control. [He] said when he first proposed doing this, Soviets strongly objected but he threatened pull students out and Soviets finally agreed. (Note: CPP official setting up branches is notorious pro-Communist Kwaku Akwei.)” FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 244, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 02.03. 1964.

<sup>698</sup> Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 241.

## **Pulling the Plug: The United States and the Termination of the Ghana Experiment**

As the atmosphere between Accra and Washington turned sour, the British began wondering, as they had done in 1961, whether even the Volta scheme might be at risk. In December 1963, the British Prime Minister Sir Douglas-Home asked Dean Rusk about the United States' position on aid for Ghana. Acknowledging that all indicators showed "a drastic shift to the Left" on the part of Nkrumah, he expressed though his preoccupation about the possibility of the United States "pulling out of the Volta Dam project" for political reasons, which he said he would consider "a tremendous decision."<sup>699</sup> Rusk reassured him, saying that "he thought that the United States had crossed the political bridge when they had taken their original decision to proceed with the Volta Dam project," and that therefore politically motivated decisions were, at this stage, unlikely.

It is true that, in fact, the VRP had become Nkrumah's best "life insurance," at least in terms of relations with the United States — and he undoubtedly knew this. As long as the Volta scheme was under construction, Washington had no interest in breaking with Accra. The dilemma which the Kennedy administration had faced in the fall of 1961 — swallow the bitter pill and support a Soviet-friendly regime or face a second Aswan-type disgrace — was still valid in 1964, despite the provocations of the Ghana regime.

This "life insurance" though came with two catches. First, it had an expiring date. With the completion of the dam, scheduled for the end of 1965, most of the leverage Nkrumah could exert through it would fall away. Second, it could not hinder the US administration in pursuing a two-track approach in regard to Ghana. On the one hand, it tried to keep the relations at an acceptable minimum standard by a mix of pressure and direct influence on Nkrumah through figures known to have leverage on him, such as Mahoney, Sir Jackson and his wife Barbara Ward, Calhoun and Kaiser. On

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<sup>699</sup> TNA, PREM 11/4583, "Record Of A Conversation Between The Prime Minister And The United States Secretary Of State At 10 Downing Street, At 10 p.m. On December 18, 1963."

the other hand, it worked covertly to undermine Nkrumah's power and lay the ground for a regime change.

The first serious consultations in regard to the latter option, after the 1961 failed coup, took place in Washington during the crisis of January-February 1964. Against discreet suggestions by the head of the CIA John McCone, that "the Volta Dam and the Aluminium Project should be reviewed in view of Nkrumah's attitude," the secretary of state asked "whether General Ankrah might not take over." However, though the general was widely rumoured in this sense, McCone had to reply that he showed no signs of "political ambition." Considering that Ghana's military had been shaped in the British tradition of non-involvement in politics, McCone correctly predicted "that if it was desired to develop something [a coup]," the only way was to work on a "joint program" with London.<sup>700</sup> As a matter of fact, Rusk asked the following day his British colleague "whether the British had considered doing anything to obtain support from the Ghanaian army," which Foreign Minister Butler answered vaguely but positively.<sup>701</sup>

The discussions held at the highest level between the United States and Britain on Ghana in February showed a substantial coincidence of views between the two allies. Under Secretary Harriman said that Nkrumah's behaviour "had become intolerable," and Home agreed that he had "gone round the bend"; however, considering Nkrumah's unpredictability, Britain's prime minister warned against the consequences of a cancelling of the Volta dam project at this stage, to which Johnson replied that while he "obviously did not want the Soviets to get a base in Ghana," it would be "difficult to keep on giving aid in the face of public opinion in the United States concerning Ghana's actions and attitudes."<sup>702</sup> Secretary Rusk expressed the concept visually: "The idea that the United States was a docile old cow that gave milk, and if it was kicked in the flank it gave more milk was coming to an end."<sup>703</sup>

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<sup>700</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 236, Memorandum for the Record, 11.02.1964.

<sup>701</sup> TNA, DO 221/58, Record of a meeting held in the White House, 12.02.1964.

<sup>702</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 238, Memorandum of Conversation, 12.02.1964.

<sup>703</sup> TNA, DO 221/58, Record of a meeting held in the White House, 12.02.1964.

While the discussions between Washington and London continued on how to develop a coordinated approach, the West Africa Bureau of the State Department presented Mennen Williams with a nine-point action programme for Ghana, which can be considered a sort of blueprint for US Ghana policy in this phase, and deserves hence a closer view.<sup>704</sup> Based on the premise that “by his present actions, Nkrumah is daily rendering our [the United States’] position in Ghana more difficult,” and that this could “only lead to circumstances under which our position could well become untenable,” Director William Trimble reckoned that Nkrumah’s drift to the left “could be slowed down by a well conceived and executed action program,” which then “could induce a chain reaction eventually leading to Nkrumah’s downfall.”

The nine measures envisaged for the action ranged from classical diplomatic expressions of disapprobation, such as the postponement of Mahoney’s return to Ghana, or representations made to Nkrumah by the ambassador and by Edgar Kaiser, to measures of economic pressure (“IBRD Review of Its Support of Volta,” “Slow-down in Payments on the Volta Dam Project,” “Termination of NIH [National Institutes of Health] Facility” in Accra), and even outright “psychological warfare,” meant to “to diminish support for Nkrumah within Ghana and nurture the conviction among the Ghanaian people that their country’s welfare and independence necessitate his removal,” while at the same time “bring[ing] home to other African leaders that Nkrumah is a problem which they must face up to in their own national interest.”<sup>705</sup>

The action plan for Ghana was presented to Johnson on 13 February 1964, sanitized of its more explicit parts on bringing about Nkrumah’s downfall through “psychological warfare” of which the CIA would in any case take care of, and with the only significant addition — despite Trimble’s advice — of the possibility of

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<sup>704</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 237, Memorandum From the Director of the Office of West African Affairs (Trimble) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams), 11.02.1964.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid. It is interesting to note that in the same memorandum Trimble recommended that Mahoney “should *not* [italics added] bring a letter from the President to Nkrumah since it might (a) serve further to inflate Nkrumah’s ego; (b) encourage him to initiate an exchange of correspondence with the President and (c) be quoted out of context by Nkrumah to serve his own purposes.” It is clear that many in the Department had resented JFK’s approach to Africa, which tended to bypass Foggy Bottom to establish a direct rapport with the foreign nationalist leaders and with the ambassadors on the spot. Now the bureaucrats encouraged as they could Johnson’s tendency to keep at distance from the heads of developing countries and to re-establish the traditional, bottom-up channels of ministerial-centred policymaking, cf. Nielsen, *The Great Powers in Africa*, p. 307.

sending a letter from Johnson to Nkrumah, “if conditions are sufficiently favorable in terms of success.”<sup>706</sup> It was approved by Johnson in a meeting with Harriman, Mahoney, Mennen Williams, but without the state secretary, on the following day. Harriman remarked that they “were not coming to the President for instructions but rather were advising him of the situation and the plan of action we would follow unless he should choose to advise us to the contrary.” Johnson made no attempt in fact to get into the substance of things, and limited himself to approving all seven points of the plan without major comments.<sup>707</sup>

By the end of February 1964 Kaiser was back to Washington and reported at a meeting with the president, Rusk, McCone, Harriman, Williams, Kaiser, Calhoun, Brubeck, and Mahoney of his talks with Nkrumah.<sup>708</sup> Kaiser described how he had made clear to Nkrumah that he needed to “stop the anti-American actions in his country,” otherwise “he, Kaiser, could not proceed with the work.” Nevertheless, despite the worsening climate for investment and the political risks tied to Volta scheme (“it was entirely possible that Nkrumah would take it over”), Kaiser stressed that the Ghanaians had not breached so far any part of their contractual obligations, and that he therefore saw no reason to withdraw from the project at this point.

At the insistence of McCone, Kaiser also explained to President Johnson Nkrumah’s obsession with the CIA. With respect to this, McCone asked Mahoney whether “he felt that CIA was operating independently of his office,” but the ambassador, who had brought CIA activity more under his control during Kennedy’s mandate, firmly denied this. McCone later had separate meetings with Harriman, who was in favour of proceeding with the VRP and wanted to make sure the CIA did too, and with Kaiser, who was anxious that Nkrumah might “extract a statement” from someone accused of the attempt that they were CIA agents.

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<sup>706</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 239, Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson, 13.02.1964.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid., Document 240, Memorandum of Conversation, 14.02.1964.

<sup>708</sup> There are two records of meetings on Ghana for the 26 February, one drafted by the director of the CIA, the other by William Brubeck from the National Security Council Staff. Ibid., Document 241, Memorandum for the Record, 26.02.1964; Document 242, Memorandum of Meeting, 26.02.1964. McCone was an old acquaintance of Kaiser’s, a former industrialist from California and a Republican like himself.

It is interesting to note, at this point, how much Nkrumah himself, with his vocal denunciation of the agency's real or alleged activities, had in fact brought back the CIA to the central role in the management of Ghanaian affairs it apparently had lost during the last phase of the Kennedy administration. It was as if the sleeping demons Nkrumah had evoked would now really begin to haunt him.

Johnson adopted in the following an aloofness tactic and let his emissaries, Mahoney in the first place, deal with the troublesome Ghanaian dictator. The envoy met with Nkrumah at the beginning of March and made him clear that his government regarded the relations between the United States and Ghana "in grave condition," but tried also to reassure him about the role of the CIA in Ghana: "During my incumbency absolutely nothing has been done by any US agency which could be construed in any way as being directed against [you or your] government," to which Nkrumah only replied: "I will take your word for it."<sup>709</sup>

The Osagyefo tried to stay tough. In a letter to President Johnson dated 26 February 1964 he reiterated the allegations against the CIA's "subversive activities," while he defended "Ghana's socialist ideals and the place of foreign investment within the socialist structure which we intend to build," and promised that if the Western press "continued to indulge in scurrilous and unjustified attacks," the press warfare between the two countries would linger on.<sup>710</sup> Johnson, compelled at this point to give a reply, expressed in a letter the — rather unrealistic — hope "that you and I will be able to create together the same kind of open and direct relationship you had with President Kennedy," then dismissed once again "the allegation that the CIA is carrying on subversive activities in Ghana," since the United States was "contributing as a Government and as private citizens to the development of Ghana," and thus they would be "naturally deeply concerned when these positive efforts are

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<sup>709</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 244, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 02.03.1964.

<sup>710</sup> Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 243-245.

jeopardized by actions and propaganda that serve no apparent purpose other than to damage our relations.”<sup>711</sup>

The next American visitor scheduled to pay a visit to Nkrumah was Under Secretary Harriman, in late March. According to Thompson, he “used strong language indeed” and played the Volta card, telling him that the United States would pull out if Ghana kept “steering down a road that is hostile to the US or American interests there.”<sup>712</sup> Nkrumah went out of his way to provide assurance that there would be a better climate for the United States in Ghana from then on, but Harriman recommended nonetheless to “keep his feet to the fire”, so as to prevent him to fall back again to far left positions.<sup>713</sup> By now the United States had as its objective to keep the relations with Ghana at a tolerable level, in order to allow the completion of the Volta scheme, waiting in the meantime for a regime change that would come sooner or later come to Accra, while Nkrumah in vain endeavoured to convince Washington that his country was genuinely non-aligned and not a “fellow traveller” of the communists.<sup>714</sup>

### **First the Lull, then the Storm: The Congo Crisis Again**

The relationship between Ghana and the West became somewhat more relaxed as of April 1964. This change in atmosphere was undoubtedly also the result of US pressure and diplomacy, but had foremost its roots in the fact that Nkrumah had launched in March the Seven Year Development Plan, whose success rested to a large extent on foreign investment. So while the Osagyefo proclaimed the goal “to build in Ghana a socialist State,” he had to admit that to achieve this objective Ghana would have to remain, “*for some time to come*” [my emphasis], a mixed economy,

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<sup>711</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 246, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana, 17.03.1964.

<sup>712</sup> Thompson, Ghana’s Foreign Policy, p. 303.

<sup>713</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 247, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 23.03.1964; Document 248, Summary Record of the 526th Meeting of the National Security Council, 03.04.1964

<sup>714</sup> In an aide memoire delivered to the US embassy in Accra during Harriman’s visit, Nkrumah argued “that all Ghana’s past difficulties which loom ahead for all Africa, arise from the refusal or inability of the United States to accept non-alignment as a valid and positive policy of Ghana.” TNA, DO 221/58, Aide Memoire, 22.03.1964.



where foreign investors were welcome, “provided they leave us an agreed portion [of profit] for promoting the welfare and happiness of our people.”<sup>715</sup>

In order to save foreign currency and deal with the endemic balance of payments problem, Ghana applied for 18 million dollars worth of foodstuffs under the Public Law (P.L.) 480 food surplus programme of the United States (Food for Peace),<sup>716</sup> as well as for food aid from the UN World Food Programme, and requested an increase in its financial quota at the IMF.<sup>717</sup> Apart from technical difficulties, the United States’ reply to the application for surplus food was moderately positive, but vague. As the British observed — who had been approached by Ghana for loans too — now that the Americans were fully committed with the VRP, including the smelter, they had lost this element of uncertainty as political leverage, and so they enjoyed “to keep the Ghanaians guessing about their intentions [on the food aid] as long as possible, since Nkrumah tended to be much more moderate when there was some aid still at stake. [...] A grant of P.L. 480 aid would be a relatively inexpensive and convenient way of regaining this leverage.”<sup>718</sup> So with the food request pending, the summer passed by rather quietly on the Ghanaian-American front, which is what the Johnson administration, engaged in the presidential campaign for the president’s re-election in November, was actually longing for.

Another storm was gathering though, this time not tied to Ghana’s domestic politics, but to wider international issues. For one thing, the situation in Vietnam was getting out of hand after the Tonkin Gulf incident, and the ensuing military escalation surely did not make the United States more popular in the Third World. The Johnson administration’s penchant towards militaristic solutions became even more evident when in March 1965 the United States invaded with thirty-three thousand soldiers the Dominican Republic, to prevent the re-installation of a progressive regime which had been overthrown by a military junta.<sup>719</sup> What brought US-African relations back

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<sup>715</sup> Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, p. 351-354.

<sup>716</sup> Cf. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 160-161.

<sup>717</sup> TNA, DO 221/58, n.d., n.n.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, Owen to Wool-Lewis (CRO), 28.05.1964.

<sup>719</sup> See Latham, “The Cold War in the Third World, 1963–1975,” in Leffler and Westad, 258–80.

to their lowest point after the death of Lumumba however was without a doubt the flaring up again of the Congo crisis after the end of the UN mission in 1963.

In the summer of 1964, Katanga's former secessionist leader Moïse Tshombe, detested by most African nationalists, had made it on the chair of prime minister of the Congo. His government was being propped up by the United States and Belgium with money, mercenaries, logistical support and training, to help it especially face the left-wing insurgencies which had broken out in the East of the country. When the rebels conquered Stanleyville, the ancient stronghold of the Lumumbists, and took hundreds of whites as hostages to protect themselves against the advancing mercenary forces, the issue raised international concern again.<sup>720</sup> The OAU established a Conciliation Commission, which tried to bring about a release of the hostages by negotiation.

However, after his (re-)election, President Johnson considered that he could not afford to be seen as "soft on communism," and that strong-arm tactics were needed to uphold the anti-communist order in the Third World.<sup>721</sup> On 24 November, US aircraft dropped therefore a rescue force of about three hundred Belgian paratroopers at the Stanleyville airfield, who quickly overpowered the Congolese rebels, rescued the hostages with minimum losses and organized an airlift to evacuate the remaining Europeans and Americans. According to Nielsen, the Stanleyville episode ended "the Era of Good feeling which began with the Kennedy Inaugural" for Africa-American relations, providing at the same time "a classic example of how a given set of facts can be interpreted in diametrically opposite ways, depending upon national viewpoints."<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> Cf. Young, M. Crawford. "Post-Independence Politics in the Congo." *Transition*, no. 26 (Jan. 1966): 34–41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2934325> [23.09.2015]; and Gleijeses, Piero. "'Flee! The White Giants Are Coming!': The United States, the Mercenaries, and the Congo, 1964–65." *Diplomatic History* 18, no. 2 (April 1, 1994): 207–37. <http://dh.oxfordjournals.org/content/18/2/207> [23.09.2015]. It is known that Tshombe, as his predecessor Adoula, employed CIA funds to buy support of tribal and political leaders — to such an extent, that even the CIA themselves wondered "whether the wholesale buying of political [text omitted] leaders is a sound basis for establishing a stable government." FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 191, Draft Paper Prepared in the Department of State, n.d.

<sup>721</sup> Costigliola, Frank. "US Foreign Policy from Kennedy to Johnson." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 112–33. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.

<sup>722</sup> Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 308.

For Washington, the operation had been a perfectly legitimate humanitarian intervention, carried out with approval of the country's central government, once the OAU's negotiations had already broken down. The Africans though were outraged — Ghana was of course on the forefront of the protesters — as they maintained that when the paratroopers intervened the Conciliation Commission was still at work, and that the humanitarian motives were just a pretext for another “wanton aggression” by the Western imperialists against a defenceless African people. What is clear is that the operation was felt as a humiliation in Africa, as it “exposed the frightening weakness of the new African states in attempting to control their own destiny.”<sup>723</sup> Moreover, it was surely exposed to allegations, which cannot be dismissed out of hand, of being in fact motivated more by racial solidarity than by sincerely humanitarian concerns.

### **From the Ghanaian Experiment to the Ghanaian Menace**

After the controversy over the Stanleyville intervention, President Johnson became more interested in African affairs.<sup>724</sup> Knowing that he needed to show a more progressive side of his policy in the developing world, he gave mandate to Mennen Williams to elaborate the draft of a “New,” or “Strengthened,” policy towards Africa.<sup>725</sup> This approach bore some fruits in the medium term, considering also the declining prestige of the Soviet Union in Africa.<sup>726</sup> However, for Ghana this relative change in pace came too late. Deprived of the personal relationship he held with Kennedy, already wary of US imperialism, and ideologically prone to the Marxist world view, Nkrumah stuck to the perception that Washington had fallen back to the anti-communist unilateralism of the pre-Bay-of-Pigs era. He sought a closer alignment with the Soviet Union, China and East Germany at the military and

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<sup>723</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>724</sup> Johnson's staff remarked: “The President's night-reading on African affairs had aroused this concern. [...] [He is] anxious to make his own mark in Africa.” FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 198, Memorandum From Ulric Haynes of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), 15.06.1965.

<sup>725</sup> See FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Documents 198, 199, 200.

<sup>726</sup> Cf. Lerner, “Climbing off the Back Burner,” p. 578-607.

intelligence level, as a means to step up the support for various African rebel guerrilla movements throughout the continent.<sup>727</sup>

Ghana's "subversive" activities, which had strained the relations especially with its immediate neighbours, were known in Washington, at the highest level, at least since early 1962, but had never raised any special concern.<sup>728</sup> However, according to Thompson, in 1965 for the first time

the Americans began to take a serious view of the threat that Nkrumah now offered. In the past they had dismissed his machinations as of only nuisance value, or even as help to the American cause because of the counterproductive means he used to advance his ends. By mid-1965 all this was changing as concrete American interests began to be affected. Nkrumah could threaten the status quo in Africa; he could undermine regimes friendly to America; and he could transmit substantial aid to the Congolese rebels.<sup>729</sup>

This might be an exaggerated estimate of Accra's capacity to influence events on a continental scale. However, by the end of 1964 the British too were coming to the conclusion that their interests, and those of the Nkrumah regime, were by now at odds.<sup>730</sup> Although the Soviets had succeeded in 1963, after the Missile Crisis, to establish a Moscow-Conakry-Havana flight route, and were able now, by modifying the Tu-114 aircraft, to fly direct connections between Russia and Cuba,<sup>731</sup> the airfield they were building in northern Ghana was considered nonetheless as a threat by Washington.<sup>732</sup> Of course, not everyone in Washington shared the view that the contacts between the East and the radical African states posed a particular problem to US interests. Johnson's adviser on national security Robert Komer reckoned that the Africanists at the State Department tended "to run too fast after the radical Africans. They overstate the risks to us from a degree of Chicom [Chinese Communist] or Soviet influence in certain countries. Our experience to date has been that most

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<sup>727</sup> See PRAAD, ADM 16/65, "Nkrumah's Subversion In Africa - Documentary evidence of Nkrumah's interference in the affairs of other African states."

<sup>728</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 244, Prepared in the Office of West Coast and Malian Affairs, 12.02.1962.

<sup>729</sup> Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 395.

<sup>730</sup> TNA, DO 221/58, Smedley to Chadwick (C.R.O.), 30.10.1964. The British too were afraid of increased military aid for Ghana by the East: "The political effect of increased aid would be to make Ghana, by then the most powerful (in military terms) state in West Africa, a more fruitful field than ever for Communist subversion." DO 195/213, J.I.C., n.d.

<sup>731</sup> Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, p. 222.

<sup>732</sup> What the US government apparently did not know, was that the Russians were helping Ghana to start a civilian nuclear programme as well, s. PRAAD, RG 17/2/66.

African states which have tasted the fruits of Communist support in the first flush of independence have tended to get a stomach ache (Morocco, Guinea, Mali and Kenya are cases in point).<sup>733</sup> In any case, the “tactical disengagement from the bad guys” Komer suggested to adopt was well advanced in the case of Ghana by the spring of 1965, and nobody argued against another, very important recommendation of his: “I’m against rushing in too fast to bail out radical regimes in trouble.”<sup>734</sup>

In 1965 Nkrumah’s political kingdom was coming as rapidly to an end, as was his ability to make realistic assessments of the situation. Assassination attempts, sustained pressures from his leftwing advisers, the tug-of-war for influence between the East and the West, internal discontent about police-state measures, Ghana’s isolation among its neighbours and estrangement at the OAU level, frequent rumours about possible coups d’état and, not least, the severe financial crisis the country was facing because of the tumbling cocoa price, had taken their toll on the capacity of the Osagyefo to play with skill the complicated game he was playing at the international level.<sup>735</sup> So when Nkrumah’s emissaries stepped forward to ask the governments of all the Western industrialized countries for financial help to overcome Ghana’s balance of payments crisis he was perhaps thinking that he would be able to play off again the West against the East as he had done for the VRP.<sup>736</sup>

However, this time the capitalist camp knew that the East, itself short on hard currency and engaged in trade with the Africans only by the clearing method, would not be available for the kind of cash injection Accra had in mind.<sup>737</sup> So Washington and London made sure none of their allies agreed to Nkrumah’s requests, and the matter was referred to the IMF, well knowing that the Fund would impose on Ghana

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<sup>733</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 199, Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to President Johnson, 19.06.1965.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid.

<sup>735</sup> Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 246.

<sup>736</sup> TNA, DO 153/21, Smedley to Bottomley (C.R.O.), 02.11.1965.

<sup>737</sup> Cf. TNA, DO 153/19. The Ghanaians even found out that the Soviet Union, despite all the rhetoric, preferred to buy cocoa from Western dealers at market prices rather than directly from them at higher prices, DO 195/210, Counter Subversion Committee - Working Group on Ghana, n.d.

severe financial restrictions in exchange for the loans, which Accra in turn would find hard to accept, especially in the run-up of the OAU summit.<sup>738</sup>

### **Waiting for Good News: The Johnson Administration and the Coup**

While Washington starved Ghana financially, it awaited trepidatiously news of a military take-over, which however constantly failed to materialize, much to the disappointment of the CIA and the State Department. At the beginning of March 1965 there were strong rumours that General Ankrah and General Otu were finally ready to stage a coup d'état against Nkrumah. In a meeting with the director of the CIA in Washington, Ambassador Mahoney said that he was not confident that the present plot would succeed — according to CIA reports, the conspirators had “a tendency to procrastinate” the final decision. The ambassador did feel, however, “that one way or another Nkrumah would be out within a year,” and forecast, quite correctly, that “initially, at least, a military junta would take over, headed perhaps by Acting Police Commissioner Harley.”<sup>739</sup>

The regime struck back against rumour-mongering and intrigues with another demonstration organized by the student union in front of the United States and Nigeria embassies, officially to protest against the involvement of Nigerian mercenaries in the Congo.<sup>740</sup> Then Nkrumah himself stepped forward and delivered a speech to the Ghanaian parliament, in which for the first time he personally sharply criticized the United States for being the successor of Belgian colonialism in the Congo, and hinted also at America's racialist tendencies.<sup>741</sup> The two generals rumoured as probable leaders for a coup were sacked during the summer, and General Barwah took the place of Chief of Army staff. This staved the coup off for

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<sup>738</sup> “Will Nkrumah Listen to the I.M.F.?” Christopher Johnson, *Financial Times*, 20.08.1965.

<sup>739</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 251, Memorandum of Conversation, 11.03.1965

<sup>740</sup> TNA, DO 195/30, Smedley to C.R.O., 13.03.1965. Nigeria was one of the African countries where opponents of the Nkrumah regime had found refuge.

<sup>741</sup> *Ibid.*, Smedley to CRO, 06.04.1965.

1965, but could not quell the lingering discontent in the armed forces for their lack of resources, while the Presidential Regiment was being propped up the Russians.<sup>742</sup>

In one of the last conversations between Ambassador Mahoney — he concluded his mandate in Ghana by the end of May 1965 — and Ghana's autocrat, the US ambassador came down very hard on Nkrumah for his speech on the Congo. Mahoney said he was “personally shocked” for the contents of the “throughout loaded and slanted speech”; he read out loud some of the passages which most had bothered him, and added:

What [is] particularly deplorable in [the] speech, I said, was [the] use [of the] terms “racist” and “hatred” in reference [to the] US, and his use [of] “fascist” as epithet. I noted [that the] Ghanaian press [was] so bad I no longer [was] interested in talking about it, but reminded him of [the] conversation I had with him [one] year ago when he said he had admonished [the] press against using offensive epithets. Now he [was] personally talking that way. I said I would never have believed that man of his sophistication and refinement would use [a] language like that against my country, and it shock[ed] to hear him do so.<sup>743</sup>

Nkrumah put forward some vague attenuating circumstance; then he buckled, put the face in his hands, and cried.<sup>744</sup> He said Mahoney “could not understand [the] ordeal he had been through during [the] last month” and tried to lay all the blame on Tshombe, but Mahoney had long since given up on him, and did not expect any special result to come out from the conversation.

Nkrumah's time was running out, but he still believed he could polish up his image by mediating in the Vietnam conflict. In August Ghana's Foreign Minister Quaison-Sackey was received at the White House, carrying a letter from Nkrumah in which the latter asked to halt the bombing on the North, so as to allow him to travel safely to Hanoi and meet with Ho Chi Minh. Johnson showed no interest in meeting Nkrumah after his eventual visit to Hanoi, or in Nkrumah's self-elected mediator role in general. He read out the letter, then replied to the foreign minister that the United States was not bombing Hanoi, and had not intensified the bombing of North

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<sup>742</sup> See TNA, DO 153/4; cf. Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 246-249.

<sup>743</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 252, Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State, 02.04.1965.

<sup>744</sup> Nkrumah became increasingly emotional during the last period of his presidency, s. Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 246.

Vietnam either.<sup>745</sup> Considering the almost terminal state of the relations between Accra and Washington, it should come as no surprise that Johnson did not take Nkrumah's effort to bring about a mediated end to the war in Vietnam seriously — nor did his antagonist Ho Chi Minh, for that matter.

One of the few in the Johnson administration who still considered that there were chances to improve US-Ghanaian relations was, apparently, Assistant Secretary of State Mennen Williams. At the end of September he travelled to Accra and met Nkrumah, his Foreign Minister Kojo Botsio and the Minister of Defence, Kofi Baako. He reported of a “very successful visit”, and of “frank exchanges” with Ghana's supreme leader. Williams told Washington that although Nkrumah's popularity was declining due to the financial crisis, he found him in good shape and appearing firm in the saddle, in “control over major instruments of power and his security forces.” He did not rule out the possibility that “when Nkrumah feels effects of his disastrous policies he may well begin to base decisions more on rational considerations rather than emotions as in the past.”<sup>746</sup>

However, even these last hopes, for what they were worth, were dashed when on 11 October Nkrumah's last publishing effort as head of state — ghosted by various collaborators<sup>747</sup> — was presented, *Neo-Colonialism - The Last Stage of Imperialism*.<sup>748</sup> In retrospective, it must be considered one of Nkrumah's most successful works. As it provided for the first time a clear definition and a close-up examination of the question of neocolonialism, it is still taken as reference in our days for historical scrutinies on the emergence of this concept in the second half of

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<sup>745</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 254, Memorandum of Conversation, 06.08.1965. This might have been true on the paper, but bore little resemblance to what the Ghanaian diplomatic mission reported from Hanoi, or to the experience the Soviet Premier Kosygin had recently made during his visit in North Vietnam. Ghana's envoy Kwesi Armah reported that Ho Chi Minh had felt compelled to withdraw a previous invitation for Nkrumah due to the “increase in intensity and frequency of U.S. air attacks.” PRAAD, RG 17/1/472. Armah himself was terrified by the bombings around Hanoi, “and spent much of his time [in Hanoi] rushing in and out of air raid shelters.” Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 247. Cf. Savranskaya, Svetlana, and William Taubman. “Soviet Foreign Policy, 1962–1975.” In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 134–57. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.

<sup>746</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968 Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 255, Telegram From the Embassy in Togo to the Department of State, 30.09.1965.

<sup>747</sup> According to Thompson, “the book was written by five non-Ghanaians, it was said after the coup.” Ghana's Foreign Policy, p. 397. Cf. Rooney, *The Political kingdom in the Third World*, p. 249.

<sup>748</sup> London: Heinemann, 1965.



the twentieth century.<sup>749</sup> The book, in which Nkrumah advocates African unity and solidarity among the non-aligned of the Third World against Western neocolonialism (the “worst form of imperialism”) represented the final nail in the coffin for the already moribund relations with the United States.<sup>750</sup>

Washington could have probably lived with most of the text. What the Americans could hardly digest was the last chapter, in which Nkrumah illustrates “the mechanisms of neo-colonialism” by the example of the US “Invisible Government,” which in Nkrumah’s words provides “suction cups and muscular strength” to the “Wall Street octopus” around the globe, through international agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank, labour organizations as the ICFTU, political parties like the British Labour, means of propaganda like Hollywood movies, Western media or evangelical organizations, and disguised instruments of intelligence such as the Peace Corps and the United States Information Agency, as well as, of course, through the CIA itself.<sup>751</sup>

At first, US diplomacy tried to ignore the book, which didn’t seem to raise much attention outside of Ghana anyway. When however at the meeting of the OAU in November Nkrumah began handing it out to the convened African heads of state and government, the US government felt compelled to act, or, so they feared, it would appear that for a foreign country could take strong anti-US positions with no consequences.<sup>752</sup>

Mennen Williams summoned the Ghanaian ambassador in Washington and “lodged [a] stern oral protest,” then handed him out an aide memoire in which the “unprecedented” nature of the attacks contained in the book was singled out. The arrival of the new US Ambassador to Ghana, Franklin Williams, was postponed until the following year, and, most importantly, on 20 November Washington officially turned down Ghana’s request for surplus food under the P.L. 480 — which fitted

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<sup>749</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 46-49.

<sup>750</sup> Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism*, p. x.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239-254.

<sup>752</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 256, Circular Telegram From the Department of State to Embassies in Africa, 23.11.1965.

neatly also in the strategy of denying all financial and economic help to Ghana to accelerate the downfall of the regime.<sup>753</sup> Nkrumah expressed surprise for the piqued reactions in the United States to his book. In the new year message for 1966 he regretted the imposition of “food sanctions” on Ghana, adding that, in any case, “food so heavily laden with strings could prove indigestible in Ghana.” Nevertheless, he tried to play down the incident, inviting all the main US personalities who had had a role in the VRP to take part in the inauguration of the Volta dam.<sup>754</sup>

In these last weeks before the February coup, rumours of a military take-over run wild. Rooney, commenting on the fact that in 1962 CIA was paying an allowance to Ghanaian oppositional leaders without informing the US ambassador, has raised the interesting question: “If the CIA acted behind the back of a powerful ambassador like Mahoney who was known to have close and direct access to Kennedy, what did it do when Mahoney left and there was no American ambassador in Accra during the crucial months before the coup — May 1965 to January 1966?”<sup>755</sup> To be sure, the CIA station in Accra did not remain idle in this period, as it had not in the months before. However, the best estimate of America’s role in “the coup that toppled Kwame Nkrumah” is probably reflected in the following, brief memorandum that Bob Komer submitted to McGeorge Bundy’s attention in 1965:

FYI, we may have a pro-Western coup in Ghana soon. Certain key military and police figures have been planning one for some time, and Ghana’s deteriorating economic condition may provide the spark.

The plotters are keeping us briefed, and State [Department] thinks we’re more on the inside than the British. *While we’re not directly involved (I’m told), we and other Western countries (including France) have been helping to set up the situation by ignoring Nkrumah’s pleas for economic aid* [italics added]. The new OCAM (Francophone) group’s refusal to attend any OAU meeting in Accra (because of Nkrumah’s plotting) will further isolate him. All in all, looks good.<sup>756</sup>

The CIA typically gets most of the blame (or the credit) when an American-unfriendly government becomes victim of a coup d’état, but this tends to overshadow

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<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

<sup>754</sup> Obeng, Selected Speeches, p. 475.

<sup>755</sup> The Political kingdom in the Third World, p. 230.

<sup>756</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 253, Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security, Affairs (Bundy), 27.05.1965.

the role that the US government as a whole and its foreign policy can have to foster, or deter, a regime change in a foreign country. In the case of Nkrumah's Ghana, the encouragement the CIA gave to the plotters was significant, but as the message from Komer reveals, even more important were the denial of financial aid and the contribution to Ghana's diplomatic isolation in Africa. By ignoring Nkrumah's pleas to provide the cocoa-producing nations of Africa and Latin America with a fair, stable price for their crops, and avoiding to support Ghana's development effort once the Volta scheme was completed, the United States, together with its allies, set the stage for the regime change which would end Ghana's experience as a Western-critical, militant Panafricanist state.

In this sense must be understood also the encouragement the Johnson administration gave to Nkrumah's trip to Hanoi, although they could not in fact have cared less about this mediation attempt. The CIA knew that the plotters were afraid of taking action while the president was in the country, and awaited the moment when he would be on one of his state missions. On 21 January, Johnson thus wrote the following, rather warm letter to his Ghanaian counterpart:

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your kindness in receiving my emissary, Governor Williams, on such short notice to discuss the problem of achieving an honorable and peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

The Governor has reported your thoughts on this complicated and extremely important subject. I can assure you that your counsel will be of great help to me as I face the decisions that must be made.

I am grateful for your expression of interest and willingness to be of assistance in helping to establish a dialogue which could lead to the peace in Vietnam that we both so greatly desire.

Sincerely,

Lyndon Johnson

In this missive shines through what Rahman calls the "official U.S. duplicity," as "Washington displayed to his face a deceitful friendliness that, in effect, matched Nkrumah's duplicity, turned the tables and in the end defeated him at his own game."<sup>757</sup> Nkrumah thought that using the threat to go over to the Russians he could extract further aid from the West, while keeping up his stature as anti-imperialist, non-aligned leader by criticizing neocolonialism. He miscalculated.

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<sup>757</sup> Rahman, *The Regime Change of Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 18.

By 1965 Ghana had lost its value as a political experiment, both for Britain and the United States, and constituted an embarrassment for both. At the same time, the West had called Nkrumah's bluff, as they realized that, although he was surely a nuisance for them, he could not possibly become a Castro.<sup>758</sup> Four weeks after President Johnson greeted Nkrumah's intention to go to Hanoi, the Ghanaian military delivered the United States of the man who, as Komer summarized with his characteristic sharpness, "was doing more to undermine our [American] interests than any other black African."<sup>759</sup> Now, after this "fortuitous windfall," which followed closely another accomplishment of US pressure and covert action, i.e. the regime change in Indonesia, the dialogue partner in Accra was a military regime that even the US government considered "almost pathetically pro-Western."<sup>760</sup> Having eliminated from the scene annoying figures such as Sukarno, Juan Bosch and Kwame Nkrumah, the Johnson administration was now free at last to sink undisturbed into the quagmire of Vietnam.

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<sup>758</sup> As Mahoney has summed up: "Nkrumah frequently serves the purposes of Mao and Khrushchev but that [is] too much of an egotist ever willingly to be their pawn." FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 253, Memorandum of Conversation, 19.11.1963.

<sup>759</sup> FRUS, 1964–1968 Volume XXIV, Africa, Document 260. Memorandum From the President's Acting Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, (Komer) to President Johnson, 12.03.1966

<sup>760</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter III: The Federal Republic of Germany and Ghana

### 3.1. The First Years

Among the triad of states chosen in this study to illustrate Ghana's relations with the West, the case of Germany is surely the one more likely to arouse surprise in the reader's mind. While it goes without saying that Britain, as former colonial power, and also the United States, as leading nation of the capitalist world, entertained significant relations with Africa and Ghana, linking Bonn, or Berlin, with sub-Saharan Africa, might not be as immediate. After all, the colonial experience of the German Empire had been abruptly truncated by the First World War without leaving behind any major cultural bequeathal; and Germany's postcolonial, mostly commercial relations with Africa were upset again by the second global conflict.<sup>761</sup>

However, as we will see in the following chapters, by the end of the 1950s, as the wave of decolonization reached Africa south of the Sahara, both post-war German states, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, or Federal Republic, or West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany), had begun making major inroads in the region, and their influence can by no means dismissed as negligible. In Ghana, the Federal Republic in particular had a major economic role, usually ranking third in the charts of foreign trade during the Nkrumah era, after Britain and the United States, and second — sometimes even first — for the purchase of Ghanaian cocoa.<sup>762</sup> By the end of the Nkrumah regime, in 1966, West Germany was also second on the list of Ghana's creditor countries.<sup>763</sup>

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<sup>761</sup> See Engel, *Die Afrikapolitik*, p. 29 ff. The cultural and economic ties with the Boers in South Africa are surely a special case in this respect. Another sort of special, postcolonial relationship developed however between the Federal Republic and Togo, see *ibid.*, p. 253 ff. The Western part of the former German colony of Togo was taken over as a protectorate by the British after WWI, and then attributed to the Gold Coast by plebiscite in 1956. The Federal Republic managed the relations with the "League of German Togolanders," an association of nostalgics of German colonialism mostly from the Ewe tribe with great carefulness, to avoid irritating the British or the French, s. PA AA B34 72, *Dienstinstruktionen für den Botschafter in Accra*, 22.11.1958, Attachment 3; PA AA B34 3.

<sup>762</sup> The Federal Republic is generally considered in the literature Ghana's trade partner number three after Great Britain and the United States, see Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 402. However, it is hard to find disaggregated data for Ghana's foreign trade relations in the period in consideration. Official Ghanaian statistics on general trade directions distinguish in between trading blocs, in particular sterling area, EEC area, dollar area, planned economies and others. The general tendency of Ghana's trade relations between 1957 and 1966 was a decrease in trade volume with the sterling area, from about 40 to 30 per cent, with a corresponding increase of the other three main trade blocs. The EEC

While in the first years of Ghana's independence Britain staved off the West German penetration in its former colony, by the end of the 1950s London and Washington began encouraging it, in order to strengthen Western influence as a whole in the face of rising East bloc activism. The buoyant economy on the Rhine was supposed to help keeping the Ghanaian experiment on the right path, i.e. aligned to the West, by trade relations and development aid. Bonn's political influence was limited, however, because in the 1960s the Federal Republic was entangled in its own, miniature-scale Cold War with the GDR, which was mainly fought in the non-aligned countries, where the East Germans hoped to break the diplomatic quarantine, imposed by Bonn in the name of the so-called "Hallstein-Doctrine," weighing so heavily on the GDR's international status.<sup>764</sup>

The last years of the Nkrumah regime in particular were marked by an intense German-German rivalry.<sup>765</sup> Nkrumah and his regime sought to exploit the animosity between the two German states to extract more aid from both; however, as we will see, Ghana's ambiguous position on the German question succeeded only to a limited extent in spurring capital injections from either side of the conflict.

Both Germanies, each in its own manner, entertained close and significant political relations with the Ghanaian regime and its leadership. The following chapter, however, is dedicated mostly to the role of the Federal Republic in the Ghanaian experiment, albeit in the face of the rising influence of the GDR. The perspective

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bloc, in which the FRG took a major share, usually provided for 20 to 30 per cent of Ghana's import and export, coming close second after the sterling bloc, which would confirm West Germany's pivotal role as buyer of Ghanaian produce, s. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, Appendix D, p. 450. We know in any case from sources of the West German Foreign Office that trade with the FRG accounted for 10.7 and 7.5 per cent (second and fifth rank) of Ghana's imports, and for 13.4 and 12.3 of Ghana's exports (third rank), in 1960 and 1961 respectively, PA AA B68 192. And we know that West Germany remained the second best buyer of Ghana's export hit, cocoa, all over this period, see PA AA B34 486, Sachs to Under Secretary, 07.04.1964.

<sup>763</sup> Armah, *Peace without Power*, p. 208. Cf. PA AA, B34 487, Brühl to Foreign Office, 07.08.1964, p. 8.

<sup>764</sup> The "Hallstein Doctrine" was the unofficial name of Bonn's diplomatic embargo against the GDR, in force until 1972. It stated that no country, with the only exception of the Soviet Union because of its special status as occupying power, could entertain diplomatic relations with both German states. Whenever any third state appeared willing to recognize East Germany, the West Germans threatened with the break of relations and economic sanctions. The Hallstein Doctrine was effective in keeping the GDR isolated, but could not avoid the opening of East German trade missions and consulates in various countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. See Gray, William Glenn. *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949 - 1969*. The New Cold War History. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2003.

<sup>765</sup> Cf. in particular Schleicher's case study on the relations between East Germany and Ghana in Engel and Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten*, p. 181-219; s.a. Lorenzini, *Due Germanie in Africa*.

adopted will be thus mostly that of the bilateral relations at diplomatic and political level between Bonn and Accra during the Nkrumah era.<sup>766</sup>

### **Putting Out Feelers: The FRG and the Gold Coast**

As Ghana in the mid-1950s proceeded steadily towards the CPP's proclaimed goal — Self-Government Now — West Germany was still in the middle of the reconstruction process of its international diplomatic network.<sup>767</sup> In regard to Africa, some commercial ties had been revived in the first post-war years without the presence of German diplomats on the spot; then, as of 1951, Bonn began re-establishing diplomatic relations with the independent African states at the consular level, beginning with South Africa and Egypt, but also with the European dependencies in Africa.

The expansion of West German international presence received a great impulse when the Federal Republic gained back its formal sovereignty on 5 May 1955. Even before, however, the revived Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*) had started showing increasing interest for the colonial territories south of the Sahara whose independence was expected in the near future and which looked more promising as a market for German exports, such as the Gold Coast and Nigeria.<sup>768</sup>

In spring 1956 the Federal Republic and the Gold Coast established diplomatic relations at consular level. The West German consul, Hermann Saam, arrived in Accra on 8 May 1956, during the run-up of the pre-independence elections which, as most observers expected, would consolidate the rule of the CPP and speed up the path towards self-rule. Ten days after his arrival, Saam was received by Governor Arden-Clarke, formally still the highest political authority in the country. The governor told Saam that he expected Ghana's parliament to deliberate in favour of "self-government" right after the new assembly had been formed; after that, the British

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<sup>766</sup> While the relations of the Federal Republic to Africa have progressively evolved towards an increasing multilateralism, the first years were dominated by relations at the bilateral level, Engel, *Die Afrikapolitik*, p. 13

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35-39.

<sup>768</sup> The Foreign Office opened a consulate in Lagos, Nigeria, on 4 January 1954, Engel, *Die Afrikapolitik*, p. 38.

government would set a date for independence right away.<sup>769</sup> The next day, the eve of Whit Sunday, Nkrumah unexpectedly sent an emissary to tell the German consul that he was ready to meet him for an informal exchange — which shows how eager the prime minister was to expand Ghana’s network of international ties.<sup>770</sup>

In the following weeks, after Nkrumah, Saam met most of the relevant political personalities of the CPP government — Komla Gbedemah, Kojo Botsio, Ako Adjei. Despite the cordiality of these first contacts, one issue began lingering in particular, which would keep the West German diplomat busy for the following two years: the timing for the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Ghana and the FRG. Already before the date of independence had been set, Gbedemah asked Saam when the West German consulate would be made a fully fledged embassy, receiving however a question for an answer, about Ghana’s intentions on opening embassies in Europe. Gbedemah, Nkrumah’s man in the West, replied that his government wanted first to open an embassy either in Paris or in London, and only later in Bonn.<sup>771</sup> The CPP government was still striving to create a valid diplomatic service, which held back Nkrumah’s international ambitions; nevertheless, Nkrumah insisted about the quick establishing of foreign embassies in Accra for prestige reasons, and because he expected diplomatic relations to further the inflow of capital from non-British sources.<sup>772</sup>

## **The Issue of Diplomatic Relations**

As soon as the date of 6 March 1957 was set for Ghana’s independence, the West German consul began sending reports to the Foreign Office in which he stressed the historic significance of this event (even over-emphasizing: “it is the first time, to my knowledge, that a colony obtains its independence by way of evolution and not through war or revolution”), as well as the rosy perspectives for the expansion of

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<sup>769</sup> PA AA B34 5, Saam to Foreign Office, 22.05.1956.

<sup>770</sup> Nkrumah told the consul in particular that these were crucial months for the Gold Coast, and that he wanted the Federal Republic to keep in touch without delay with what was happening, *ibid.*

<sup>771</sup> PA AA B34 5, Saam to Foreign Office, 31.05.1956.

<sup>772</sup> Cf. Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 17-20.



trade relations with the new African nations.<sup>773</sup> These appeals apparently were met with sympathy by the Foreign Office. The department responsible for the relations with the French and the British dependencies reckoned that

the establishment of the new Ghanaian state is for us an outstandingly significant event from the political and economic point of view. The Federal Government has strong interest in nurturing in every way its political, economic and cultural relations with the young states of the African continent. Ghana is the first former colonial territory south of the Sahara to obtain full sovereignty. The arrangement of our relations with Ghana ought hence to be a model for the future relations with the other nascent States of the African region. Our economic relations with Ghana are especially significant. The former Gold Coast is, after the South African Union, our foremost supplier in Africa.<sup>774</sup>

A high-level governmental delegation, led by the Federal Minister for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Victims of War, Theodor Oberländer, was sent to the independence celebrations. The events in Accra showed however that a head-on engagement of the Federal Republic in Ghana and in the other British and French colonial territories south of the Sahara approaching independence was still premature. Although the minister reported of overall positive feelings in Ghana towards the Germans, mainly as a result of their non-colonial status since 1919, he said though that he could not really reach out to the other delegations during the celebrations because of the “slightly suspicious” attitude showed by the British as well as by the French.<sup>775</sup>

Oberländer attributed this hostility to the colonial powers’ jealousy: “The English believe we are going to take over the economic activity in the country and oust them, the French see in the establishment of Ghana a threat to Togo and to their other colonies.”<sup>776</sup> While the attitude of the British and the French at the Ghanaian independence celebrations might have been influenced also by the fact that the head of the West German delegation was a former well-known, high-ranking Nazi party

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<sup>773</sup> Saam insisted that, while Nkrumah was at the time not quite Europe-oriented, some ministers in his government could be rated as German-friendly, and that in general, the high quality of German products, especially automobiles, provided for excellent visiting cards for the Federal Republic, PA AA B34 3, Saam to Foreign Office, 08.12.1956.

<sup>774</sup> PA AA B34 4, Aufzeichnung, Welck, 18.01.1957.

<sup>775</sup> PA AA B34 4, Kurzbericht, Oberländer, n.d.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid.

member,<sup>777</sup> this kind of hostility against a German presence in Africa was felt at higher levels of the Foreign Office too, leading to a cautious attitude. Oberländer complained with Bonn that while the US and Soviet emissaries had declared right away that their respective governments wished to open embassies in Ghana, and the French had upgraded their consulate to an embassy during the first meeting with the new government, he on the contrary had not been able to tell Nkrumah whether the Federal Republic wished to exchange ambassadors or just envoys with Ghana. He asked the Foreign Office by telegraph to provide him instructions in this sense, yet without receiving reply.<sup>778</sup>

After Ghana's independence, the sub-department at the Foreign Office in charge of African affairs, argued without much enthusiasm that considering the pressure coming from the government in Accra, and the fact that the Federal Republic already entertained an embassy in Monrovia, capital of a much smaller state than Ghana, an exchange at the level of ambassadors was at that point "unavoidable." They recommended therefore the upgrading of the consulate in Accra and the nomination of Saam as chargé d'affaires, as long as the Ghanaians themselves were not able to send an ambassador to Bonn.<sup>779</sup> The Federal Government, in any case, was in no hurry to dispatch an ambassador to Accra.

Two months later, on 6 June, Consul Saam was finally able to present acting Foreign Minister Gbedemah the letter in which the Federal Republic asked for the establishment of an embassy in Ghana. When the chargé was received by Gbedemah on 26 June, the minister did not fail to remark that, "contrarily to other states already represented in Ghana," the Federal Republic had taken its time in this matter. Saam could only reply pointing at "budgetary dispositions" which had allegedly delayed the procedure in question.<sup>780</sup>

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<sup>777</sup> See e.g. Wachs, Philipp-Christian. *Der Fall Theodor Oberländer: (1905 - 1998). Ein Lehrstück deutscher Geschichte*. Frankfurt/Main: Campus-Verl., 2000.

<sup>778</sup> PA AA B34 4, Kurzbericht, Oberländer, n.d.

<sup>779</sup> PA AA B34 5, Aufzeichnung, Marchtaler, 04.04.1957.

<sup>780</sup> PA AA B34 5, Saam to Foreign Office, 29.06.1957.

As a matter of fact, the Foreign Office in Bonn was going out of its way to show the British and the French that the West Germans were not sneaking into Africa to undermine their privileged position. In this prudent approach, they were supported also by the Africa Association, a consortium of Hamburg-based trading companies with ties to West Africa going back to the colonial epoch, which albeit eager to make business with Africa, recommended making sure that initiatives such as the “Goodwill-Mission” the Federal Ministry of Economics was sending to Ghana and Nigeria were not exploited by African nationalists to promote “anti-colonialism.”<sup>781</sup>

The Ghanaians viewed the results of the goodwill-mission, composed by representatives of the private sector, with some disappointment. The Foreign Office recommended however the postponement of a further governmental study mission, for which the Ghanaian Ministry of Commerce and Industry was pushing, to 1958. Because of the increasingly authoritarian measures the government was employing against the opposition, the Foreign Office feared that “English and other foreign economic circles, which could be annoyed by German competitors, might exploit the cooperation between the Federal Government and the Nkrumah-Edusei regime for their propaganda against us.”<sup>782</sup> Moreover, the Germans were quite attentive not to fuel the exaggerated expectations the Africans carried — there were no investors in the Federal Republic, for example, interested in the Volta scheme.

On the diplomatic side, Ghanaians kept urging Consul Saam to have a West German ambassador accredited in Accra. When Nkrumah in person, at a reception, told him that he was looking forward to receiving his accreditation as ambassador, Saam replied that this depended only upon Ghana’s prime minister — as soon as he sent an ambassador to Bonn, the Federal Republic would accredit one other in Accra. Nkrumah uttered, rather piqued: “This is not possible! You know very well that we

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<sup>781</sup> PA AA B34 5, Jantzen to Schroeder, 22.06.1957.

<sup>782</sup> PA AA B34 5, Böker, 25.10.1957. Krobo Edusei had been recently nominated by Nkrumah minister of the interior, and was considered for some time Ghana’s “big man” number two, PA AA B34 71, Saam to Foreign Office, 17.01.1958; cf. Austin, Dennis. *Politics in Ghana, 1946 - 1960*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964, p. 363 ff.

can build our foreign service only in time. We are a young and new country, Germany cannot pretend reciprocity from us.”<sup>783</sup>

The Foreign Office recommended Saam not to push the argument of reciprocity too far, and suggested to put forward instead budgetary and personnel-kind of difficulties — which the consul knew would sound implausible against the news that were reaching Africa about West Germany’s economic “miracle.”<sup>784</sup> In any case, the Foreign Office had already decided that sending an ambassador to Accra was not a priority, and that the Ghanaians would have to live with it. In January 1958, Bonn finally began to show some understanding for the difficulties of a developing country, and told the chargé in Accra, that they would accept for the time being the secondary accreditation for the Federal Republic of an ambassador residing somewhere else in Europe.<sup>785</sup> Nevertheless, it would take ten additional months before a West German diplomat was eventually sent to Ghana as ambassador.

### **Ghana’s New Friends: The Other Germans Arrive**

On 28 October 1958 Carl Stein, a career diplomat who had entered the Foreign Service in 1936, took over from Saam the representation in Accra.<sup>786</sup> Four days later he was summoned to Fort Christiansborg by Prime Minister Nkrumah, although he still had not presented his accreditation letter to the British governor as protocol would have required. Stein remained positively impressed by the Ghanaian leader — he found Nkrumah “like an apostle pervaded by his mission.”<sup>787</sup> It was high time, in fact, for the Federal Republic to strengthen its ties with Ghana, firstly because in that period the country enjoyed its maximum period of international prestige as unofficial representative of the still largely colonized African continent. But also because the penetration of the East Germans in former French Guinea had shown what dangers

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<sup>783</sup> PA AA B34 5, Saam to Foreign Office, 25.07.1957.

<sup>784</sup> PA AA B34 5, Böker to Saam, 14.08.1957; Saam to Foreign Office, 02.09.1957.

<sup>785</sup> PA AA B34 5, Schroeder to Accra, 17.01.1958.

<sup>786</sup> Auswärtiges Amt, ed. *Biographisches Handbuch des deutschen Auswärtigen Dienstes 1871-1945*. Vol. S. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007, p. 337-338.

<sup>787</sup> PA AA B34 72, Stein to Foreign Office, 05.11.1958.

could rest in a country of recent independence for West Germany's struggle against the recognition of the GDR.<sup>788</sup>

By the end of 1958, Gbedemah announced that in the following months he intended to pay a visit to London, Paris, Bonn and Washington, to lobby for Western support for Ghana's second Five-Year Development Plan.<sup>789</sup> Accra's patience with the West was running out. For almost two years Ghana had played, at least at the level of foreign relations, the role of the Western poster boy in sub-Saharan Africa. They had waited until January 1959 to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, exercised a moderating influence on radicals like Guinea's President Sékou Touré, and provided a counterweight to Nasser's anti-imperialist nationalism.<sup>790</sup> However, lacking major foreign investments or capital aid initiatives, this strategy was not paying off at the economic level as much as Nkrumah had hoped. Ghana remained a developing economy dangerously dependent on one single commodity — cocoa.<sup>791</sup>

Nkrumah had made it clear during his trip to the United States in 1958: "The leaders of the new Africa have no alternative but to look for outside assistance. ... We have to modernize. Either we shall do so with the interest and support of the West, or we shall be compelled to turn elsewhere. This is not a warning or a threat, but a straight statement of political reality."<sup>792</sup> Ghana began diversifying its political perspectives, in the hope to open up new sources of capital that could kick-start the era of "jet-propelled" industrial development which it aspired to. In 1958 it had already signed an agreement with Israel for the exchange of goods and services for £7 million. In January 1959, Ghana signed a trade and technical cooperation agreement

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<sup>788</sup> See Gray, *Germany's Cold War*, p.91, 107-115; cf. The Foreign Office knew: "The sword of Damocles of the establishment of relations with Pankow [East Berlin] hangs over our relations with this country from Guinea's day of birth on." PA AA B130 4770, 13.03.1960.

<sup>789</sup> PA AA B34 72, Stein to Foreign Office, 30.12.1958.

<sup>790</sup> Cf. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 28-31.

<sup>791</sup> In 1959, sources from the Ghanaian government complained with the East German trade delegation, that "since independence more than six trade delegations have come and made promises, without living up to them." PA AA B34 75, Stein to Foreign Office, 05.02.1959.

<sup>792</sup> As quoted in Rivkin, Arnold. *Africa and the West*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1962, p.10.

with the United Arab Republic (UAR, de facto Egypt) too — an agreement “highly political in character,” as the Foreign Office in Bonn noted.

In April, the Ghanaians started negotiating with a Soviet trade delegation, and in July the two governments exchanged notes to prepare the ratification of a formal trade agreement.<sup>793</sup> What raised even more concern in Bonn — the GDR was among the Eastern bloc states that rushed to Ghana in that period. Between January and February 1959 a first East German delegation, led by the Deputy Minister External Trade, spent a few weeks in Accra. They had recently gained a foothold in Guinea, which was politically close to Ghana; their showing up in Accra should not have come as a surprise therefore.<sup>794</sup>

As the West Germans knew very well, the GDR was not only interested in commerce with these developing, non-aligned countries, but sought in particular to improve its international status through the diplomatic recognition by non-aligned states, which the Federal Republic had been able so far to avert by threatening retaliatory measures. The GDR appreciated Ghana’s importance at the pan-African level, and considered that a breakthrough here could have major consequences for the rest of the continent.<sup>795</sup> The desire of the East German regime for symbolic and official gestures of recognition matched well with the sensitivity of the countries of recent independence to political acts that could raise their own international prestige. Therefore, even though Ghana could have easily kept selling its cocoa to East Germany through Western trading hubs such as Hamburg or London, the government agreed to the opening of a GDR trade mission in Accra.<sup>796</sup>

Of course, this was still very far from the full diplomatic recognition the East Germans craved, but it represented a step forward from their point of view, and a significant change for the relations between Ghana and the Federal Republic as well. Up to that moment, the West German diplomatic representation had been the only voice of Germany in Ghana; now, de facto two German states were represented in

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<sup>793</sup> PA AA B34 72, Bargaen, 01.08.1959.

<sup>794</sup> PA AA B34 75, Stein to Foreign Office, 24.02.1959.

<sup>795</sup> Hans-Georg Schleicher, interview by the author, 23.05.2014.

<sup>796</sup> PA AA MfAA C 1483 73, Botsio to Eckloff, 11.02.1959.

Accra, although one of them was not officially recognized by the Ghanaian government. In the following seven years the GDR delegation, acting as a “crypto-embassy,” did everything it could not only to expand trade and economic relations with Ghana, which in theory was its only mission, but to strengthen the political ties between East Berlin and the CPP regime, undermine West Germany’s credibility in the eyes of the Ghanaians, and progressively raise the official status of the trade mission so as to reach, if not the establishment of diplomatic relations at embassies level, at least the opening of a general consulate in Accra.<sup>797</sup> The Foreign Office, especially in the first years, was taken aback by the aggressiveness of this political campaign and by the favour with which it was met in Ghana’s left-wing and governmental circles; it was forced to a mixed strategy of threats and blandishments to fight it back.<sup>798</sup>

### **West Germany’s Integration in the Experiment**

The Ghanaian delegation stayed in Bonn from 13 to 15 August 1959. Ghana’s minister of finance hoped to obtain from Bonn £5 to 10 million at a favourable interest rate; the Federal Government was reluctant to make available large-scale capital aid to foreign governments though, and redirected Ghana’s plea to private financial institutions, which however didn’t show any special interest either.<sup>799</sup> For political reasons, to prevent further East bloc inroads south of the Sahara and keep the “Ghana experiment” West-oriented, the Foreign Office recommended nevertheless complying with Ghana’s wishes for a comprehensive trade and economic cooperation agreement, even though West Germany’s necessities for commercial exchanges with Ghana were satisfied quite well without it. Due to the pivotal role played by Ghana in Africa at the political level, and in view of the possibility that it might become the kernel of a pan-African federation of states, the Federal Republic decided that it was

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<sup>797</sup> Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, p. 37.

<sup>798</sup> Engel, Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten in Afrika*, p. 214-218.

<sup>799</sup> PA AA B34 72, Stein to Foreign Office, 30.12.1958.

interested in “lively relations” with Accra, and the Foreign Office pressured the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs to give into Gbedemah’s wishes for credits.<sup>800</sup>

Four inter-governmental sub-agreements were signed, as a result of a general protocol between Minister Gbedemah and Under Secretary van Scherpenberg. The most important of these entitled Ghana to draw on suppliers’ credits for up to 200 million Deutsche Mark (DM), about £17 million, for imports from the Federal Republic, guaranteed by the Federal Government — one half with terms of payment up to five years, and the other half with terms of payment up to ten years.<sup>801</sup>

Three other agreements regulated reciprocal investments and terms of trade exchange between the countries, as well as forms of technical and economic cooperation, including West German offers to support education and vocational training of Ghanaian students in the Federal Republic.<sup>802</sup> It was not the direct injection of investment capital the Ghanaian government aimed at, but it represented nonetheless the first comprehensive agreement of this kind signed between Ghana and a country of the West — exception made for the trade agreement with Israel — and seemed to consolidate the ties between Accra and the “Free World.”

One year later, the Ghanaians also signed an agreement with a consortium of West German manufacturing firms for the implementation of credit-based industrial development projects.<sup>803</sup> To justify this opening towards Accra, Bonn internally stressed that it was acting on behalf of the entire Western alliance, arguing that in its relations with Ghana, the Federal Republic pursued no political goals, exception made for “the strengthening of the Western orientation of the country,” and that it had only economic interests to represent.<sup>804</sup>

It is true that for the first time since the independence of their first colony in Black Africa, the British were sending some signals of encouragement for a more active

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<sup>800</sup> PA AA B34 72, Bargaen, 01.08.1959.

<sup>801</sup> PA AA B34 73.

<sup>802</sup> Ibid.

<sup>803</sup> TNA, FO 371/146813, Marshall to Davies, 03.10.1960.

<sup>804</sup> PA AA B34 72, Dienstinstruktionen für den Botschafter in Accra, 22.11.1958, Annex 3.



West German role in Africa.<sup>805</sup> The Ghanaian government had asked for a German banking expert to be nominated as head of the Ghana Central Bank, but the Federal Government hesitated at first to propose a candidate, as they feared “to arouse the impression in Great Britain, that the Federal Republic desires for selfish reasons to get hold of those posts that Great Britain is forced to vacate.”<sup>806</sup> Much to their surprise though, the governor of the Bank of England raised the issue with the FRG’s Federal President, urging him to advance a candidature for the Bank of Ghana, before a “non-Western friendly personality” took over the post.<sup>807</sup>

The more German-friendly attitude in London was consistent with a general policy line which was being elaborated at the level of NATO for the containment of communism on the African continent. In November 1958, the North Atlantic Council set up a Committee on Africa, whose members included all European colonial and mandatory powers (exception made for Spain, not part of NATO), the United States, and the Federal Republic of Germany. Its purpose was to “to report to the Council on the methods and progress of Soviet penetration both direct and indirect in Africa south of the Sahara, as well as the measures adopted or proposed to meet this threat; and to make suggestions for consideration by the Council.”<sup>808</sup>

The inclusion in this committee formalized the acceptance of West Germany’s presence south of the Sahara by the NATO allies. The Committee’s report, presented in March 1959, reckoned that, with decolonization progressing, “direct control of events becomes impossible,” therefore “new ways have to be found of influencing African thought and action.” It was highlighted that “it would be highly shortsighted

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<sup>805</sup> The Ghanaians got wind of how Britain and France blocked Germany’s activities in Africa. Ghana’s ambassador in Bonn, Theodor Asare, told Nkrumah that there was “a triangular gentleman agreement [sic] relating to economic and political spheres of influence in Africa in which Ghana is a party. This appears to be between the German, British and French Governments. The British are demanding that Germany should go slow in granting aids to Ghana towards our Industrial Development Plan, also in matters of education and culture; Germany should let Britain dominate. Strict instructions have been given to the German Ambassador on this matter as a means of pleasing Britain and France although within their hearts the Germans are opposed to it. They would prefer the initiative to be taken by Ghana to release them out of this Dilemma [sic], and I shall discuss that also in detail.” PRAAD RG 17/1/173, Asare to Nkrumah, 18.01.1960.

<sup>806</sup> PA AA B34 73, Aufzeichnung, Harkort, 19.08.1959.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid.

<sup>808</sup> North Atlantic Council, Committee on Africa, “Communist Penetration In Africa”. 20.03.1959. C-M (59) 32, archives.nato.int [11.05.2012].

of the Western powers to transplant their old rivalries into a jealous tutorship of new independent African states [...].” Therefore, the report concluded, “members of the North Atlantic Alliance, *including those who have no administrative responsibilities in Africa* [italics added], will have an increasing role to play in providing the means to keep the independent and emerging states, of Africa linked economically with the West.”<sup>809</sup> Germany’s finance capital in particular was requested to keep postcolonial Africa on the Western-friendly path. The Foreign Office welcomed the news as sign that the Federal Republic had been accepted as “Africa power,” and decided that finally there were the right conditions to hold the first West German Ambassadors’ Conference for Africa, which was put on schedule for October that year.<sup>810</sup>

### **From the Addis Ababa Conference to Ghana**

The ambassadors’ conference of October 1959 in Addis Ababa was a pivotal moment for the policy towards Africa of the Federal Republic. For the first time Germany’s role south of the Sahara was made clear, and some general guidelines for its diplomatic and political action for the following decade laid down.<sup>811</sup> The conference defined as top priority the preservation of the African continent to the sphere of influence of the Western alliance. The Federal Republic was supposed to help make sure the decolonization process and the establishment of the postcolonial order took place in an evolutionary and not revolutionary manner. For this purpose, Under Secretary Scherpenberg said that Germany, being devoid of direct territorial responsibilities, had “special possibilities of intervention” in Africa.<sup>812</sup>

While the Federal Republic represented itself as an “Africa power” yet devoid of particular political interests, preoccupied only to play its role as good Western citizen, during the Addis Ababa the Foreign Office stressed also the issue of the attitude of non-aligned countries towards the GDR and the German question. In this

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<sup>809</sup> Ibid., p. 19-23.

<sup>810</sup> PA AA, B1, Bd. 115, Aufzeichnung, Etzdorf, 25.06.1959.

<sup>811</sup> Cf. Engel, Die Afrikapolitik, p. 39-41; Gray, Germany’s Cold War, p. 104-105.

<sup>812</sup> PA AA B1 260, Protokoll der Afrikakonferenz des Auswärtigen Amts (12-18.10.1959) in Addis Abeba, Scherpenberg, p. 438.

sense, there was a contradiction in Bonn's claim of being immune to the pursuit of selfish aims, while the diplomats on the spot received the very clear instruction to "pay the danger of GDR activities in Africa a very special attention."<sup>813</sup>

Of course, East Germany was a Soviet satellite, and the containment of any communist country fitted in the general anti-Soviet strategy. Nonetheless, as the Foreign Office told Ambassador Stein in Ghana, the isolation of the GDR was not only part of the fight against the Soviet Union and its allies, but touched the very heart of Germany's highest national interest, namely the issue of national unity.<sup>814</sup> Although the "Soviet Occupied Zone" (SOZ), as the GDR was referred to in West Germany, had not showed until that point any special interest for Africa south of the Sahara, it could not be excluded that it would sooner or later try to get to its diplomatic recognition in the non-aligned countries through trade, cultural policy and propaganda. All ambassadors of the Federal Republic were supposed to remind their host governments that "the recognition of the 'GDR' by third countries would be considered by the Federal Government as support for the illegitimate detachment of a part of the German sovereign territory and as an interference in the internal affairs of Germany," which would lead to a "reconsideration" of the relations between the two countries.<sup>815</sup>

In the case of Ghana, West Germany's fears seemed to materialize for the first time when a trade delegation from the GDR managed to sign an agreement with the government for the opening of a permanent trade mission of the GDR.<sup>816</sup> Responding to enquiries of Ambassador Stein, the secretary-general of the Ghanaian foreign ministry denied the granting of consular privileges to the East German trade delegation, knowing that this would raise an issue with Bonn.<sup>817</sup> He confirmed though

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<sup>813</sup> Ibid., p. 437.

<sup>814</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between West German and NATO aims in this period, see e.g. Hughes, *Britain, Germany and the Cold War*, p. 34ff.

<sup>815</sup> PA AA B34 72, Dienstinstruktionen für den Botschafter in Accra, 22.11.1958, Attachment 3.

<sup>816</sup> PA AA B34 75, 26.02.1959.

<sup>817</sup> The trade mission's staff enjoyed consular status and privileges right from the outset, cf. PA AA, MfAA, C 1483/73. Although the Ghanaians tried to keep this confidential, it was widely rumoured, PA AA B34 75, Stein to Foreign Office, 03.07.1959.

that the delegation had pushed very hard for the establishment of full diplomatic relations, which Ghana had refused to do though.<sup>818</sup>

During its first twelve months of activity the trade mission of the GDR in Accra, directed by the Ministry of Foreign and Inner-German Trade (MAI) yet already under supervision by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MfAA), earnestly concentrated on the development of economic and trade relations. A Ghanaian delegation was invited to the Leipzig Trade Fair, while the GDR organized an exhibition with industry and scientific products in Ghana. The West German embassy still had little to complain about, apart from one brochure containing attacks on the Federal Republic, and few GDR press statements about West Germany's support for colonialism.<sup>819</sup>

However, documents from the East German foreign ministry show that East Berlin was not very happy about this situation, and pushed for the foothold they had gained in Ghana to be exploited for political purposes. The instructions for the collaborators of the MfAA in the trade mission defined the purpose of the mission itself as "to initiate and promote the relations between the GDR and Ghana at the political, economic and cultural level, as well as in particular to prepare the establishment of normal diplomatic relations."<sup>820</sup> When at the end of the first year of activity the head of the trade mission described in his annual report the main objective of the mission as "to create the preconditions for the signing of a trade agreement, in order to expand the exchange of goods," he was reprimanded by the MfAA, which considered trade just "a means to the end."<sup>821</sup>

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<sup>818</sup> PA AA B34 75, Stein to Foreign Office, 24.02.1959.

<sup>819</sup> PA AA B34 75, Stein to Foreign Office, 15.03.1960; PA AA B34 71, Stein to Foreign Office, 11.03.1960.

<sup>820</sup> PA AA, MfAA, A 14387, „Vorläufige Dienstanweisung für die Mitarbeiter des Ministeriums für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten in der Handelsvertretung der DDR in Ghana.“

<sup>821</sup> "We believe that for all mission personnel one of the most important conclusions to draw must be to recognize that they are the political representatives of the GDR in Ghana, and have to carry out by means of trade a political job, aiming at the establishment of diplomatic relations between the GDR and Ghana." PA AA, MfAA, A 14387, Schedlich to Seidel, 02.04.1960.

## Many Germanies in Ghana

Successive developments in Ghana, both at the internal and foreign policy level, greatly facilitated the turn of the GDR trade mission towards a more politically oriented work. In July 1960 Ghana became a republic, even though it remained part of the British Commonwealth. As the West German ambassador remarked in his reports, this gave the CPP, in particular its left wing led by Secretary-General Tawia Adamafio, the chance to consolidate its power, cracking down on the political opposition, getting closer to the goal of a one-party state, and increasingly marginalizing the conservative, bourgeois forces, which the West though saw as its natural dialogue partner.<sup>822</sup>

In this context of progressive radicalization and increasing anti-imperialist rhetoric, the GDR stepped up its propaganda attacks against the rival German state. Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl helped to spread the rumour that the FRG was aiding France with its nuclear programme, which had aroused sharp protest in Africa as the French detonated an atomic bomb in the Sahara desert.<sup>823</sup> Britain's *Daily Herald* as well as Ghana's party press picked up the report, and so did the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in Accra, who accused the German embassy of having published a démenti too late, when the rumour had already widely circulated.<sup>824</sup> Public opinion in the Federal Republic was already aroused by the news that Guinea had allegedly decided to recognize the GDR, and so the matter became object of an interrogation at the Bundestag.<sup>825</sup>

The ambassador in Accra denied the allegations put forward by the press and by some parliamentarians that East Germany was gaining an "influence advantage" over the Federal Republic in Ghana. Although he conceded that the GDR had increased its public relations effort in Ghana, Stein stressed that Ghana's leadership knew very well that the GDR's economic potential could not be compared to that of the FRG;

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<sup>822</sup> PA AA B34 136, Stein to Foreign Office, 30.08.1960.

<sup>823</sup> S. PA AA B34 71, Aufzeichnung, 04.04.1960; Stein to Foreign Office, 26.08.1960.

<sup>824</sup> Krabbe, Günter. "Pankow bemüht sich um Ghana." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 14, 1960.

<sup>825</sup> PA AA B34 136, Etdorf to Accra Embassy, 24.03.1960.

for this reason Ghana had invited the latter's financial and economic advisers.<sup>826</sup> Despite its handicap in terms of friendship with some of the major colonial powers (France, Portugal), he said that the FRG had the chance to exercise through its advisers "a crucial and decisive influence on Ghana's economic and financial development in the coming years."<sup>827</sup>

By 1960, the Ghanaians had learned that Germany was not a European state as the others; they had also begun to realize they could take advantage of this situation to receive more attention from the industrialized world. The Federal Republic bought up a large share of Ghana's cocoa crop, paid in hard currency, and provided high-quality manufactured goods, credits, financial advisers, technical assistance, and scholarships for Ghanaian students. At the same time, the GDR began offering the Ghanaian press interesting stories on the misdeeds of Western colonialism in Africa, while it organized exchanges at party, trade union and societal groups level, slowly but steadily expanded trade, offered scholar- and traineeships too, and presented its industrial, scientific and technological achievements at an itinerant fair which attracted many visitors, including the prime minister himself.<sup>828</sup>

A further element in this variety of "Germanies" was added when, in order to reinforce West Germany's public relations presence, some of the *Länder* of the FRG, Hesse in particular, began engaging in contacts with the Ghanaian government. In March 1960, while at the same time the GDR inaugurated its industrial exhibition, Hesse's Prime Minister, August Georg Zinn, arrived with his delegation at Accra airport and was received with all honours, including military salute. To welcome him he found a number of important Ghanaian ministers. He was led in a convoy of state cars first to the governor-general and then to Nkrumah. Ghana's prime minister received Zinn five times during the latter's "state" visit. He was awarded by Zinn the order medal of the Baron vom Stein, while the state of Hesse granted Ghana two

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<sup>826</sup> PA AA B34 136, Stein to Foreign Office, 22.08.1960.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid. Internally, Stein took the chance of these press attacks against the embassy to re-submit to the Foreign Office his pleas for a stronger manning of the embassy staff, so as to be able to counter the activities of the GDR's trade mission. PA AA B34 136, Stein to Foreign Office, 31.03.1960.

<sup>828</sup> PA AA MfAA A 14352, Beziehungsbericht DDR/Ghana - I. Quartal 1960, 30.04.1960.

hundred scholarships for higher education and training, along with DM 50 million in government guaranteed private credit.<sup>829</sup>

The visit of the Hessian delegation surely helped the Federal Republic to push back for some time the mounting tide of East German public relations activity. However, it contributed to increase the confusion in Ghana about political realities in Germany. The West German ambassador reported that, due to their appearance as a state-like entity, the Hessians “left the impression that the Hessian government is a competitor of the Federal Government,” while on the contrary, he complained, a delegation of members of the Bundestag, on visit in Ghana a year before, had been largely ignored by its politicians and the media.<sup>830</sup> The French ambassador, observing the situation, quipped: “Now we have got three Germanies in Ghana, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic, and Hesse.”<sup>831</sup>

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<sup>829</sup> PA AA B34 137, Stein to Foreign Office, 14.03.1960

<sup>830</sup> Ibid.

<sup>831</sup> In Bonn they did not find this kind of remarks quite hilarious. The report bears a handwritten note by a Foreign Office functionary: “Not a very glad report!” Ibid.

## 3.2 The Going Gets Tough

### The FRG and the Lurch to the Left

The relatively brief period between 1959 and mid-1961 represented probably the high-water mark of West Germany's influence in Nkrumah's Ghana. The Federal Republic enjoyed a great reputation in Africa for the way in which they had rebuilt their economy after the war, and also for having confronted twice the great colonial powers France and United Kingdom. In Ghana, the right wing of the CPP, which included influential figures such as Gbedemah, Edusei and Ayeh-Kumi, was mostly pro-FRG (without disdaining flirtations with the East), while the British helped the Germans to put advisers in key positions at the financial and economic level.<sup>832</sup>

At the same time, by the end of 1959 the Ghanaians began realizing that West Germany, although the memory of its colonial past had faded, was inextricably tied to the other remaining European colonial powers and could not take a clear position on some of Africa's most pressing issues, such as Algeria or France's atomic tests. As an embarrassed Ako Adjei told the ambassador of the Federal Republic, his government found this attitude on the part of the FRG "disappointing."<sup>833</sup> Thus they increasingly began lending an ear to the East German propaganda, which eagerly rubbed salt into the FRG's wounds and tried to disturb the relations between Ghana and West Germany. The result was that the Federal Republic had to spend more time and energy to defend itself than before, and strove to fulfil the role the West had assigned to it, namely keep neutralist states in Africa and elsewhere West-friendly and out of the Soviet sphere of influence.

The Ghanaians in general accepted the existence of two German states as a (sad) matter of fact, caused by the global confrontation between West and East. As the following statement released by Ghana's foreign ministry in late 1959 shows, the

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<sup>832</sup> The head of the GDR trade mission reported that "the political and economic influence of England, the United States, and increasingly, West Germany, is very strong." PA AA MfAA A 14352, Beziehungsbericht DDR/Ghana - I. Quartal 1960, 30.04.1960. Cf. PA AA B34 138, Sachverständige für die ghanaische Regierung, Etzdorf, 22.07.1960.

<sup>833</sup> PA AA B34 74, Stein to Foreign Office, 10.11.1959.



fact that Ghana did not extend diplomatic recognition to the GDR was due, despite the convincing effort of the FRG's diplomacy, to tactical considerations, i.e. the desire not to lose the Federal Republic as economic partner, rather than to matters of principle:

#### GHANA IS GRATEFUL

The German Governments have shown in a concrete manner their genuine desire to give every possible assistance to our young nation. Just over a month ago it was announced that the Federal Republic of Germany (or West German Government) was prepared to grant Federal guarantees up to the value of 200,000,000 marks (about £16 million sterling) for investments in Ghana's development.

Last Wednesday, Mr. Kofi Baako, Minister of Education and Information on behalf of the Ghana Government signed two agreements regulating training facilities which the German Democratic Republic (the East German Government) had offered for the benefit of Ghanaian students in Germany. Under the first agreement the East German Government would accept 20 Ghanaian students for training in scientific and technical subjects at Universities and Technical schools whilst the second agreement undertook to provide facilities for 30 Ghanaian to undergo vocational or further training in factories and institutions.

Whilst expressing gratitude for these fine gestures Ghana sincerely hopes that the day will not be long when these two countries will be reunited and their peoples will live together in peace and harmony.<sup>834</sup>

Despite the ambivalent results in the defence of its diplomatic monopoly in countries like Ghana or Egypt, the Federal Republic had just managed to overcome with success the Guinea crisis, and by doing so, created a national consensus between the ruling Christian Democrats and the oppositional Social Democrats on how to spread welfare in the Third World and counter Soviet and GDR advances by the means of development aid. As after strong requests by the United States the first multibillion-mark aid package was approved by the Bundestag in late 1960, great optimism reigned in Bonn about the possibilities of influencing developments in countries of recent independence, which was further reinforced in November when aid-oriented John Kennedy was elected to the White House.<sup>835</sup>

In Ghana though, a forerunner in many aspects, appeared precociously the trend for which foreign aid (or the promise of the same) was in some cases not sufficient to prevent Third World regimes in Africa and Asia from engaging in vitriolic criticism against the West, NATO, and capitalism. As of mid-1960 the Federal Republic,

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<sup>834</sup> As quoted in PA AA B34 71, Stein to Foreign Office, 01.10.1959.

<sup>835</sup> Gray, Germany's Cold War, p. 113-115.

strongly aligned with the United States on Third World issues but often perceived in Africa as a loyal ally of the major colonial foes — France, Portugal, Belgium and Britain — began feeling this kind of pressure too. This happened for two sets of reasons: on the one hand, on the internal side, Nkrumah was facing the momentum of the radicals of the party's left wing led by Adamafo and Tettegah, as opposed to the moderate wing identified (with good reason, often) in the public opinion with corruption and self-enrichment.<sup>836</sup> At the international level, just like the Federal Republic de facto had ceased to be, with the opening of GDR general consulates and trade missions in some non-aligned countries, the only representative of Germany in the Third World, Ghana could not be considered Africa's "lonely bride" anymore, as seventeen more African states had entered the political arena in 1960. To avoid falling back from his position of political primacy, Nkrumah steered to the left, and accelerated with his pan-African plans by supporting Lumumba in the Congo. This brought him, as we have seen, on a collision course with the United States. As Ghana's newspapers filled with hysterical headlines against US-imperialism and Western neocolonialism in connection with the Congo Crisis, the FRG began henceforth considering whether investing large amounts of capital aid in a country like Ghana, apparently headed towards a Marxist-type dictatorship, was really worth the risk.<sup>837</sup>

This period, which was probably the Soviet Union's brightest and the United States' darkest hour in Africa, coincided with a changing of the guard in the Federal Republic's embassy in Accra. In October 1960 Ambassador Stein left Ghana for good; after his holiday, he was put by the Foreign Office in early retirement, and in the following ended his diplomatic career.<sup>838</sup> Whether this happened only because of the negative press comments on the embassy's work in Ghana, or also for other

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<sup>836</sup> In August, the Trade Union Congress, close to the CPP's left, managed to bring about two thousand workers to the streets, who protested against low salaries and political clientelism, PA AA B34 136, Stein to Foreign Office, 08.08.1960.

<sup>837</sup> PA AA B34 139, Eichborn to Foreign Office, 19.12.1960.

<sup>838</sup> Auswärtiges Amt, ed. Biographisches Handbuch, p. 339.

reasons, remains unclear, although the polemics surely strained the relationship between Stein and the Foreign Office.<sup>839</sup>

For about nine months, between October 1960 and the end of June 1961, the Federal Republic was represented in Ghana by a chargé d'affaires, Eichborn, and took inevitably a more observing than active political role.<sup>840</sup> This fitted well, in point of fact, in the overall situation of the relations between the West and Ghana, characterized by the transition between the Eisenhower and the Kennedy administration, and the uncertainty still surrounding the Volta project. Without clear directives from Washington, Bonn hesitated to further commit itself in Ghana; the West Germans made it known to the United States that their attitude, as well as their aid programme for Ghana, would be decisively influenced by the US decision on the Volta scheme.<sup>841</sup>

Ghana began negotiating an inter-governmental loan with the FRG, yet the latter showed great prudence, considering the political uncertainty surrounding the relations between Ghana and the West. When in March 1961 a certain Matthias Schmitt, member of the board of directors of the Berliner Bank who had been hired as consultant by the Ghanaian economic planning authority, arrived in Accra to discuss with Nkrumah credit possibilities for Ghana, his own embassy made a plea for cautiousness — the visit they said had fallen right in the middle of a “political purge,” and foreign advisers could easily become the target of attacks on the part of the left-wingers. Thus, as the West German chargé d'affaires argued, it should be avoided to fill the proposed new planning authority with German experts, as they

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<sup>839</sup> The “provisional retirement” (*einstweiliger Ruhestand*) is a measure the Federal Government can take, according to the Law on the Status of Functionaries (*Beamtenstatusgesetz*), in case of fundamental political divergencies between non-dismissible higher officials and their superiors. The public campaign against the Accra embassy led to a controversy between Ambassador Stein and the Foreign Office, as the former rejected responsibility for the criticism in the press, having requested for many months more staff for the embassy, in particular a public relations officer, without getting a response, s. PA AA B34 136, Stein to Under Secretary, 31.03.1960. I could't find conclusive documents on this episode though. By the end of March 1960, in any case, it had been decided that after his holiday Stein would not come back to the post in Accra, PA AA B34 136, Vermerk, Steltzer, 22.03.1960.

<sup>840</sup> Legation Councillor von Eichborn, *ibid.*

<sup>841</sup> The Department of State noted that the FRG was “in quandary,” and that it “would probably discontinue aid to Ghana except for fear Ghana might recognize GDR, and may well be influenced by U.S. decision.” FRUS, 1961–1963 Volume XXI, Africa, Document 236, 10.10.1961. Bonn told Washington in particular that their financing for a highway in Ghana depended on Washington's decision on the VRP, *ibid.*, Document 239, 01.12.1961.

might be exposed to allegations of “concealed imperialism.” The chargé seemed actually relieved to learn that in the end Schmitt was not able to confer with Nkrumah.<sup>842</sup>

Two things injected some dynamism at last in the relations between Bonn and Accra by the end of June 1961. First, Kennedy’s decision to confirm his backing of the Volta Project in a letter to Nkrumah, before the latter left for his tour behind the Iron Curtain, brought some motion also in the negotiations for an intergovernmental bilateral loan between the FRG and Ghana. The Ghanaian government had submitted requests for capital aid of up to £10 million, equivalent to about DM 115 million, to be employed for infrastructural projects, and the Federal Republic had agreed to take into consideration financing for about DM 80 to 90 million.<sup>843</sup> Second, after having been held for almost nine months by a chargé d’affaires, in June 1961 the embassy of the FRG was assigned a new ambassador.

### **The Tough Get Going: Ambassador Lüders**

Carl-Heinz Lüders was one of the most dynamic diplomats the FRG sent to Accra during Nkrumah’s period. His term as head of the embassy coincided with a crucial phase in the history of the Cold War, from the Berlin Wall Crisis in the summer of 1961 to the Cuban Missile Crisis in late 1962, as well as with a period of political radicalization and social tensions in Ghana. Though frequently seeking the advice of the US embassy, he often acted under the principle “when the going gets tough, the tough get going”; in the end, however, his political capital was consumed by frictions and dynamics far beyond his control.

The Foreign Office warned him in his instructions that the mission in Ghana bore certain difficulties, such as: the country’s “fundamental anticolonialist attitude”; “mistrust towards NATO and the EEC”; authoritarianism; socialist economic

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<sup>842</sup> PA AA B68 100, Eichborn to Foreign Office, 18.04.1961. This attitude is understandable, as Eichborn had just faced a few weeks before an angry crowd which protested against Lumumba’s assassination in front of the embassies of the NATO countries. Eichborn managed to calm down the excited demonstrators, who tried to attack the embassy’s building, and was commended by the Foreign Office for his engagement, PA AA B34 234, Etdorf, 07.03.1961.

<sup>843</sup> PA AA B34 235, Lüders to Foreign Office, 20.09.1961; Aufzeichnung, Böbling, 15.03.1961.

policies; as well as the “basically negative attitude of the German press towards Ghana.” However, Bonn considered Ghana “endangered, yet not lost to the East,” as the GDR had still not managed to establish diplomatic relations, while it kept strong ties to the FRG and the United Kingdom.<sup>844</sup>

Presenting the state of Ghana’s relations with non-African powers, the Foreign Office estimated “positive” relations with the Soviet Union, “fairly good” towards Britain, “lukewarm” with the United States, and “bad” with France, Belgium (Ghana had broken off diplomatic relations) and with UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld. Bonn considered the state of the own relations with Accra at the time as “friendly but not cordial,” and urged the ambassador to try to improve them by developing more mutual trust, while promoting the FRG’s viewpoint on the German issue, and simultaneously keeping an eye on the activities of East Germany and the rest of the socialist countries.<sup>845</sup>

However, Lüders impact with Ghana’s politicians was in fact far from being marked by cordiality and friendliness. Before submitting Nkrumah his letter of accreditation, he was summoned by Foreign Minister Adjei for a preliminary, informal talk, in the course of which he realized that FRG-Ghana relations were somewhat “star-crossed” at the moment. The minister in effect, after some initial small talk, complained about a shipment of arms which the Ghanaians knew had reached Portuguese Angola via Israel, to be employed in the repression of the freedom fighters.<sup>846</sup> Adjei stressed that his government was extraordinarily “touchy” when it came to deliveries of weapons by European states to Portugal; he even didn’t exclude the possibility of employing the instrument of the break in diplomatic in the worst case — a sort of reversed Hallstein Doctrine.

Lüders denied that the Federal Republic exported weapons in crisis areas, but was not able to refute precisely the allegations.<sup>847</sup> He countered though by asking the

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<sup>844</sup> PA AA B34 234, Richtlinien, Steltzer, 15.05.1961.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid.

<sup>846</sup> PA AA B34 236, Lüders to Foreign Office, 21.06.1961.

<sup>847</sup> The Foreign Office cabled to Accra that the weapons in question were remaining stock of an order of 50,000 Uzi submachine placed by the Federal Government to Israel. According to Bonn, the Portuguese had asked the Germans

minister to better precise Ghana's position on the German question. Adjei answered saying that Ghana was in favour of German unity, "having learnt to our cost what the unjust division of a people means."<sup>848</sup> Lüders thanked the minister for the clarification, reminding him that the Federal Government would consider the recognition of the GDR as a deepening of Germany's division, which could lead it to adopt the "aforementioned measures" (i.e. the break in relations).<sup>849</sup>

After this "rather chilly" meeting with the foreign minister, as Lüders described it, the new ambassador of the Federal Republic was received by Ghana's new head of state in a more "informal and relaxed atmosphere."<sup>850</sup> Both sides tried to keep the discussion friendly and positive, yet the ideological distance between the two dialogue partners often surfaced during their twenty-minute talk. Discussing economic policy, Lüders expressed understanding for Ghana's planned economic approach in these early stages of development, yet Nkrumah complained that while in Africa a planned economy could be realized only "by the full authority of the state," the West, especially the press, did not seem to realize this.<sup>851</sup>

When asked by the ambassador about Ghana's relations with East Germany — the GDR Deputy Prime Minister, Paul Scholz, had arrived in Accra that same day to attend the celebrations for the first anniversary of Ghana's republic — Nkrumah came back to this point highlighting how in his view the East seemed to show "much greater understanding" for his economic principles and political goals than the West. In any case, he confirmed that, "for the time being," he had no intention to recognize

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whether they could obtain part of the stock; the latter had responded pointing at the remaining 10,000 in Israel, in which they were not interested anymore. The Israeli ambassador in Ghana denied though knowledge of any Israeli arms sales to Portugal. It remains also unclear how the Portuguese government came to know about the weapons shipment from Israel to the Federal Republic. PA AA B34 236, Etzdorf to Accra, 30.06.1961; Lüders to Foreign Office, 04.07.1961. In any case, at the African ambassadors' conference of 1962, the head of the Africa Bureau at the Foreign Office admitted that "due to the lack of appropriate export bans, some military supplies have been delivered without the knowledge of the Foreign Office through Portugal to Angola." PA AA B34 389, Referat des VLRI Steltzer, p.5.

<sup>848</sup> The reference here is to the division of the Ewe people between the colonial powers Britain, Germany and France before, and between Ghana and Togo afterwards, which Nkrumah was trying to end by annexing Togo to Ghana, see Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 77-88.

<sup>849</sup> PA AA B34 236, Lüders to Foreign Office, 21.06.1961.

<sup>850</sup> PA AA B34 234, Lüders to Foreign Office, 30.06.1961. Ghana's press chose the line of cordiality as well to describe the event, see "A Joke With Osagyefo." *Ghanaian Times*, 30 June 1961.

<sup>851</sup> Ibid.

the GDR, being well aware of the reaction he could expect on the part of the Federal Republic.<sup>852</sup>

The Foreign Office accepted Ghana's explanation, according to which they had never invited Scholz to be present at the republic celebrations, yet the East Germans had postponed an already scheduled visit to the eve of the anniversary.<sup>853</sup> However, soon after Lüders' accreditation, for the first time the West German-Ghanaian friendship was directly put to the test. On 10 July 1961, Nkrumah arrived in the Soviet Union, the first stop on his "pilgrimage to the East."<sup>854</sup> After the first talks, the two governments released a joint communiqué, which raised some eyebrows in Washington and London, and caused great stirring in Bonn.

The contentious passage of the communiqué reads as follows: "The Soviet Government informed the Ghanaian Government of the proposals of the USSR, on the German problem. The Government of Ghana appreciated the proposals of the Soviet Government concerning a peace treaty with Germany and the settlement of the West Berlin issue on this basis."<sup>855</sup> The news that Ghana "appreciated" Soviet proposals on Germany reached the West and made headlines. The correspondent of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* concluded that "for the first time a visitor in Moscow not belonging to the Communist block has put himself behind the Soviet Union in the German question. Neither Indonesia's President Sukarno or other neutralist heads of state could be brought to give public statements on inner-European controversies during their visits in the Soviet Union."<sup>856</sup>

The episode caused, phrased in diplomatic language, "disconcertment" in Bonn. In the following days, Ghana's diplomats went out of their way to explain that the text of the communiqué had been misinterpreted, that the use of the term "appreciated" was a translation mistake due to the lack of experience by the Ghanaian delegation in Moscow, while in fact the exact translation should have been the more neutral "took

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<sup>852</sup> Ibid.

<sup>853</sup> PA AA B34 236, Lüders to Foreign Office, 03.07.1961; Vermerk, 10.07.1961.

<sup>854</sup> Cf. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 173 ff.

<sup>855</sup> PA AA B34 234, Joint Communiqué, 24.07.1961.

<sup>856</sup> "Nkrumah legt sich in der deutschen Frage fest." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 July 1961.

notice.”<sup>857</sup> Ghana’s ambassador in Bonn, Theodore Asare, blamed Nkrumah’s entourage and their ignorance of international matters for this diplomatic incident, and asked the Foreign Office not to attribute it too much importance — “the great majority of the Ghanaian people are on the side of the Federal Republic in the German and Berlin question,” he said.<sup>858</sup> Believing Ghana’s explanation or not, Bonn decided to play down the episode. West Germany’s ambassador in Moscow noticed that, although Nkrumah had adopted in good part the Soviet point of view on many international issues, such as UN reform or backing Beijing as representative of China, he had avoided to seriously commit himself on the German question, thus probably failing to live up to Khrushchev’s expectations in this respect.<sup>859</sup>

A second shock followed soon thereafter though. When Nkrumah had left for his tour, Ghana’s foreign ministry had reassured the West Germans that he intended to visit all Eastern European socialist states but the GDR. News broke though that Nkrumah had in fact paid a visit to East Berlin to receive an honorary doctorate by Humboldt University. Albeit the stop-over was declared by Ghanaian sources a non-official visit, there was great bewilderment in West Germany, considering also the great ceremonial display which had greeted the Osagyefo at Schönefeld airport in Berlin.<sup>860</sup>

This time ambassador Lüders’ demarche in the foreign ministry, which had been surprised by the East Berlin stop-over as much as the Foreign Office, was harsh.<sup>861</sup> He dismissed the argument that the visit could not be considered an official mission, saying that a head of state under these circumstances is always a representative of his country; therefore, the visit had to be considered as a statement in favour of the East and “an abandonment of the non-alignment policy.” He insisted that his government was “under the impression, that the legal recognition of the Federal Republic as the only German state is hollowed out by Ghana to such an extent, that nothing is left

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<sup>857</sup> PA AA B34 234, Aufzeichnung, Marchtaler, 02.08.1961.

<sup>858</sup> PA AA B34 237, Aufzeichnung, Marchtaler, 27.07.1961.

<sup>859</sup> PA AA B34 237, Moscow to Foreign Office, 28.07.1961

<sup>860</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of the East Berlin visit and its background, see Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, p. 70-71.

<sup>861</sup> “Bonn wird in Accra vorgestellt.” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 04.08.1961.



over except for the title.” From then on, he said, the Federal Republic would make its decisions in regard to Ghana keeping in mind not only “formal declarations, but also the concrete actions of the government of Ghana and of its head of state.”<sup>862</sup>

To avoid admitting to the public that this had been a success for the GDR, Lüders urged the Foreign Office not to pursue further steps in this respect and to avoid any further publicity to the visit. However, it is clear that it raised many questions in Bonn as to what further surprises could be expected from Nkrumah, who, as it seemed, was pursuing a lurch to the left of still unknown extent. The fact that even his own foreign ministry was kept in the dark on the East Berlin visit, showed that by then all relevant foreign policy decisions were made by Nkrumah and his immediate entourage. This posed a problem for the FRG, as Bonn’s diplomacy had so far relied on its contacts in the ministries and among the career civil servants to make its influence felt.

When after the construction of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961 Bonn asked the diplomatic missions in the neutralist states to explore the attitude of the governments in their country in regard to the German question and the issue of Berlin, Lüders was not in the position to give an answer, as he had learned that Nkrumah would not return to Ghana before mid-September, and reckoned that asking the foreign ministry was a pointless effort. The Federal Government decided to address a note, signed by Chancellor Adenauer, to all non-aligned heads of state invited to the Belgrade Conference in early September on the reunification issue and on Berlin.<sup>863</sup> It never reached Nkrumah in time though. He prepared for Belgrade enjoying Khrushchev’s hospitality in Crimea instead. Unsurprisingly, the proposals he then advanced at the neutralists’ conference were all adherent to the Soviet positions.<sup>864</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> PA AA B34 234, Lüders to Foreign Office, 02.08.1961.

<sup>863</sup> PA AA B34 234, Foreign Office to Accra [...], 22.08.1961. Cf. Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, p. 125-126.

<sup>864</sup> PA AA B34 234, Lüders to Foreign Office, 24.08.1961. Cf. Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 177-183.

## The Belgrade Non-Aligned Conference and the Takoradi Strike

In Belgrade, capital of a state to which Bonn had broken off diplomatic relations in adherence to the Hallstein Doctrine, the Federal Republic “faced the most serious challenge to its isolation campaign yet,” as the conference’s “proceedings revealed with devastating clarity just how few of the prominent nonaligned leaders shared the West’s views in German unification.”<sup>865</sup> Many participants — Tito, Sukarno, Nehru — took the stand which saw in the partition of Germany the result of the Cold War. As they advocated that global tensions between the blocs should be replaced by peaceful coexistence, the non-aligned pleaded for a negotiated solution of the German issue — which implied though the recognition of the East German regime as a legitimate dialogue partner, anathema to the Federal Republic.

Nkrumah too advanced the idea that all neutralist states publicly recognize the two German states and urge the great powers of West and East to sign a peace treaty with Germany as soon as possible.<sup>866</sup> In the end, the collective recognition of the GDR by the non-aligned failed to materialize though, because of Nasser’s opposition.<sup>867</sup> The conference spoke out only a “virtual” recognition of the de facto existence of two German states. In the aftermath, the Foreign Office pursued a number of *démarches* in various Third World capitals, to avoid that any group of states could give in to the temptation of recognizing the GDR en masse, so as to prevent West German countermeasures.<sup>868</sup>

In Ghana, during the prolonged absence of the supreme leader, the political situation seemed to evolve in a direction that might have resolved some of Bonn’s worries in this part of the world. On 6 September, Ambassador Lüders reported from Accra that a strike movement had broken out in Nkrumah’s absence among the dockers and railwaymen, directed against financial austerity, but also against the corrupt practices

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<sup>865</sup> Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, p. 127-128.

<sup>866</sup> Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, p. 181.

<sup>867</sup> The Egyptian leader was against a recognition of the territorial status quo in Europe because he opposed the status quo in the Middle East, and also because he intended to keep the leverage of East Germany so as to deter Bonn from recognizing Israel, Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, p. 129.

<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.*

of the ruling party. “It cannot be excluded,” Lüders said, „that the strike for salaries ignites a political, anti-government demonstration, as thus far the actual oppositional political leaders have kept in the background out of slyness and fear from detention by the government. Well-informed Ghanaian circles expect political consequences from the strike.”<sup>869</sup>

It appears that during the days of the Takoradi strike, associates of J.B. Danquah, leader of the opposition which was secretly backing the strikes, sought out for two of the attachés of the West German embassy, asking whether the Federal Republic could provide some funds to support the stoppage. According to the ambassador, the two diplomats remained “totally passive,” answering only that “for all sympathy for the foreign policy conception of the opposition, the ambassador could never, directly or indirectly, materially support its efforts.”<sup>870</sup> Lüders got in touch with US Ambassador Russell right away, asking for confirmation of this cautious course of action, which he received. However, he could not fail to notice that Danquah personally visited two times the residence of the American ambassador in those days.

As it seems, Russell had decided not to let his West German colleague fully in on the discussions he and the CIA were having with Danquah and with dissident members of the regime like Gbedemah.<sup>871</sup> Yet Lüders sensed that there was something going on between the United States, perhaps Britain too, and the oppositional forces in Ghana. While in one dispatch sent to Bonn on 13 September over the regular cable the ambassador expressed pessimism as to the chances that the stoppage in Sekondi-Takoradi might trigger political consequences — “the West African doesn’t possess any organisational capacity, he is not courageous enough for a revolution or to try a coup, he likes to swim with the mass and to palaver, yet not to take action”<sup>872</sup> — the following day he sent a second, encrypted cable to the Foreign Office, which reads as follows:

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<sup>869</sup> PA AA B34 233, Lüders to Foreign Office, 06.09.1961.

<sup>870</sup> PA AA B130 2378A, Lüders to Foreign Office, 18.09.1961.

<sup>871</sup> Danquah’s family would later receive a CIA allowance during his prison stay, Mahoney, J.F.K.: Ordeal in Africa, p. 184-185.

<sup>872</sup> PA AA B34 233, Lüders to Foreign Office, 13.09.1961.

opposition efforts concentrate on the general strike, to begin on the day of nkrumah's return. strike in takoradi continues, state of emergency declared there. [...] opposition has asked embassy through trusty middle-persons to provide large sum for general strike. i am remaining passive in accordance with us embassy, as chances for a coup are deemed scarce. *I leave it though to your discretion to take last chance and secretly support opposition through the bnd [the West German intelligence agency] with at least 10.000 pounds [italics added].* in this case embassy would not have to be contacted to avoid backlash in case of failure. if so, matter highly urgent. return nkrumah just announced for 16.9. i am going to forward on 16.9 remaining sum of 2.500 dm from special fund section SES-61007 [...] through appropriate single concealed action to the opposition, in case events till then allow for positive estimate of success and no contrary cable is received. request increase of special fund for this purpose.<sup>873</sup>

It seems that the ambassador had received some information, perhaps from US sources, which made look the event of a regime change not as unlikely as one week before. However, Lüders did not realize that Washington and London had put their chips more on an inside job than on Danquah and his ramshackle party.

In Bonn they were quite alarmed at Lüders' activism in the face of what they considered an "unclear political situation" in Ghana. It was agreed that the ambassador should be summoned for consultations, while in the meantime he should "abstain from any action as suggested."<sup>874</sup> Perhaps in Bonn they had received more accurate information in regard to what was really going on in Ghana, but I have found no evidence of this. In any case, the Foreign Office was worried that despite the precautions taken by the embassy to hide the contacts with the opposition, these might be revealed and compromise the FRG's political stand in Ghana, just as the ties between the CIA and Gbedemah had reached the ears of Ghana's secret police.<sup>875</sup> The Foreign Office was quite right in its prudence; in the end, even these aborted contacts between the West German embassy and the opposition became the object of press rumours.<sup>876</sup>

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<sup>873</sup> PA AA B130 2378A, Lüders to Foreign Office, 14.09.1961.

<sup>874</sup> PA AA B130 2378A, Werz, 15.09.1961; Foreign Office to Accra, 15.09.1961.

<sup>875</sup> Mahoney, J.F.K.: Ordeal in Africa, p. 173-174.

<sup>876</sup> In January 1963, during the Ghanaian ant-Western press campaign in the aftermath of the Kulungugu bomb attack, the *Ghanaian Times* relaunched the story of the financial support by the embassy of the Federal Republic for the oppositional movement in 1961, which had been published in a magazine in Britain; apparently lacking concrete evidence for the allegations, the government confirmed though its confidence in Ambassador Lüders. S. „Vertrauen zu Botschafter Lüders.“ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 05.01.1963.

## **Bonn, Accra, and the Politicization of Aid**

The aftermath of the September 1961 strike brought, as we have seen, not a regime change for Ghana but a further acceleration of the lurch to the left, as well as the final crackdown against the remnants of the official opposition. The Federal Republic, although considering that its possibilities to influence high-level decision making in Accra were decreasing, kept trying to contrast East Germany's tide of visitors and propaganda by inviting West-oriented Ghanaian politicians, journalists and other "multipliers," to visit West Germany.<sup>877</sup>

The most important consequences of the events in the summer were however to be felt in the realm of development aid. In adherence to the principle that the Federal Republic would cut off aid to countries that might recognize the East German regime, Bonn began revising the applications Ghana had made for capital aid on various infrastructural projects in the light of Accra's recent political behaviour. In this respect, Lüders point of view was decisive for remodelling the FRG's aid programme for Ghana.

The ambassador, who was recalled for consultations and had an extensive round of meetings at the Foreign Office and at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, considered that, "in the face of the pro-Eastern course of the government of Ghana," it would not be appropriate "to grant Ghana development aid as extensively as other African countries," especially those "which strive for a really neutral course."<sup>878</sup> On the other hand, Lüders knew that the FRG had still a mission to accomplish, i.e. keeping the "Ghana Experiment" oriented westwards. He had thus to agree with his US colleague in Accra that cutting off aid for Ghana completely would be counterproductive, since it would push the country further in the arms of the Soviet Union. He therefore recommended that the total sum of DM 100 million requested by Ghana should be neither approved nor rejected en bloc, rather that a number of single projects should be approved over a longer period of time of one to two years, "so as to make the

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<sup>877</sup> PA AA B34 235, Lüders to Foreign Office, 31.10.1961.

<sup>878</sup> PA AA B34 235, Lüders to Foreign Office, 17.10.1961.

government of Ghana clear, that the Federal Government is willing to help Ghana insofar as the Ghanaian government demonstrates the necessary restraint on the German question.”<sup>879</sup>

In any event, the destiny of West Germany’s capital aid programme for Ghana remained also bound to the outcome of the negotiations on the Volta scheme.<sup>880</sup> When in December 1961 news finally broke that the United States had agreed to back the Volta scheme, the FRG’s aid policy began moving again — just in time, as Nkrumah was beginning to show signs of impatience, and threatened to “draw conclusions” from Bonn’s dilatory behaviour.<sup>881</sup> Ghana was granted a DM 20 million loan for the construction of the Accra-Tema freeway project, while the other major infrastructural initiative in question, the water supply plants in Weja and Kpong, would have to be realized by a consortium of private West German enterprises with the support of credit guarantees by the Federal Government. In the end, only about twenty per cent of Ghana’s requests (DM 100 million) were agreed to by Bonn, because of Ghana’s foreign policy line: an early application of the Hallstein Doctrine to aid policy, which seems to contradict Gray’s argument that “countries that flirted with East Germany tended to draw *more* West German aid, not *less*.”<sup>882</sup>

Thanks to the signing of the agreement between the United States and Ghana on the VRP, and the preliminary understanding on the highway project with the Federal Republic, a relatively relaxed atmosphere marked the relations between Accra and Bonn in the first half of 1962. While Nkrumah abstained from further statements on the German and Berlin question, and concentrated his criticism on the EEC,<sup>883</sup> the West German ambassador did what he could to promote the activity of enterprises from the Federal Republic in Ghana, especially on infrastructural development, while

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<sup>879</sup> Ibid.

<sup>880</sup> FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, Document 239, Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Kennedy, 01.12.1961.

<sup>881</sup> PA AA B34 3620A, Lüders to Bonn, 06.01.1962.

<sup>882</sup> Germany’s Cold War, p. 159.

<sup>883</sup> PA AA B34 340, Lüders to Bonn, 21.02.1962.

Western businesses began showing uneasiness in the face of Ghana's increasingly socialist course.<sup>884</sup>

One of the most significant developments for the relations between Bonn and Accra took place in the domain of technical aid instead. In January 1962, the West German Flight Captain Hanna Reitsch received at her residence in Frankfurt on the Main a letter from Ghana's president, in which he asked her to come to his country to help establish a gliding school. Speaking with India's Prime Minister Nehru, who had flown with the German pilot at 3,000 meters height in a glider, Nkrumah had remained impressed by her accomplishments.<sup>885</sup>

Reitsch was not just a most gifted pilot, the first woman to glide over the Alps in the 1930s. From 1937 to 1945 she had been one of the Luftwaffe's experimental test pilots, probing prototypes of advanced technology such as the Me-163 rocket-powered fighter aircraft, and remained deeply involved with the Nazi regime until its very end.<sup>886</sup> Although she denied having been Hitler's lover, she surely admired the Führer very much, and was considered by many an unrepentant National Socialist.<sup>887</sup>

Despite her brown past, after the war Reitsch was hired by West Germany's Foreign Office for public relations purposes, as an ambassador for gliding and flying sports in countries such as Finland, the United States, and India. When in early 1962 she responded positively to Nkrumah's plea, and asked for permission to leave for Ghana, the Foreign Office and Ambassador Lüders saw finally a chance to establish a direct link to the elusive Ghanaian president. In March the flight captain arrived in Ghana, setting for the first time a foot on African soil, and met various times with Nkrumah himself, as well as with ministers, parliamentarians, generals of the air force, and various personalities. The West German embassy deemed her visit a great success in terms of public relations: "She was met by a wave of enthusiasm, from the

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<sup>884</sup> PA AA B34 340, Lüders to Löhr, 16.02.1962.

<sup>885</sup> Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, p. 77.

<sup>886</sup> "Nazi-Starpilotin Hanna Reitsch." *Spiegel Online*, March 29, 2012. <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/nazi-starpilotin-hanna-reitsch-a-947526.html> [12.05.2014].

<sup>887</sup> Allman, Jean. "Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing." *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 104–29. <http://ahr.oxfordjournals.org/content/118/1/104> [01.11.2015].

president down to the maid. The ‘Ghana Young Pioneers’ [the CPP’s youth organization], who usually navigate in very Eastern waters, even nominated her honorary member, with a hurrah to the friendship between Ghana and the Federal Republic.’<sup>888</sup>

In the following four years Reitsch, who remained very impressed by Nkrumah’s personality, dedicated herself completely to the realization of Ghana’s first governmental gliding school, on the grounds owned thus far by the private Accra Gliding Club. Thanks to her enthusiastic personality, which fitted very well into Nkrumah’s revolutionary plans, Reitsch soon reached a degree of confidentiality to Nkrumah that the Foreign Office could have hardly expected. She had free access to Flagstaff House, the presidential residence, as no West German ambassador could ever dream of.<sup>889</sup>

The Federal Republic profited, at times, from the privileged position of Flight Captain Hanna Reitsch. Although her personal political convictions did not always coincide with Bonn’s official policy line, and her Nazi past represented sometimes a source of embarrassment, the Federal Republic tried to exploit this channel to influence Nkrumah and keep Ghana’s non-alignment more West- than East-oriented.<sup>890</sup> In this sense, the investment the Foreign Office made on her — politically, financially<sup>891</sup> — was clearly worth the cost.

This was welcome help for Bonn. While in June, at the “World Without The Bomb” conference in Accra, Nkrumah had still opted for a relatively moderate tone, pleading for a negotiated solution of the Berlin crisis without explicitly endorsing the Soviet point of view, the bomb attack against Nkrumah at Kulungugu led to a radicalization in Ghana’s foreign policy which in the end affected the relations with the Federal Republic as well.<sup>892</sup>

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<sup>888</sup> PA AA B34 340, Eichborn to Foreign Office, 12.03.1962.

<sup>889</sup> See esp. PA AA B94 231, 320; PRAAD RG 17/1/373.

<sup>890</sup> Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, p. 78.

<sup>891</sup> Between 1962 and 1966 the Foreign Office took various hundred thousand marks from the technical cooperation budget to pay for materials, training, salaries and allowances for the gliding school project, PA AA B94 231, 320.

<sup>892</sup> Nkrumah stressed at the conference how in his view the great powers in fact agreed on substantial points on Berlin: „First, both power blocs are agreed that there should be no nuclear weapons in Berlin; secondly, that there should be no



## The Kulungugu Bomb and the Tefle Bridge

The bomb attack of Kulungugu was initially followed by surprising restraint on the part of Ghana's party press, then by the arrest of leaders of the left wing. This raised hopes in the Western diplomatic circles that Ghana would be spared a further round of radicalization in the aftermath of the attempt.<sup>893</sup> In fact, it was just the proverbial calm before the storm. As hints accumulated that the grenade thrower of Kulungugu entertained ties to the exile opposition in Togo the denunciation of imperialism and colonialism became more vocal in the pro-government press. After a further grenade attack took place in Accra on 9 September, the *Ghanaian Times* started a series called "Kulungugu and after," in which for the first time the bombing campaign was linked with the main countries of the West and their intelligence agencies.<sup>894</sup> The bomb-throwing opposition was accused of having relations with the British armed forces; then with the French, seen as the protectors of Togo; later links between Foreign Minister Adjei and the United States, who also was thrown into jail in August, were put under scrutiny. Finally, based on a tendentious interpretation of the telegram written by Lüders to condemn the terrorist attacks, it was hinted that the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany might have been informed in advance of the plot.<sup>895</sup>

The simultaneous attack on all major powers of the West by the *Ghanaian Times*, which was then repeated on *Radio Ghana*, led to a concerted démarche by Britain, the United States and West Germany — France was left out since, as Ambassador Mahoney remarked, certain neocolonialist traits could not be denied in the case of

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increase in the number of the military units now stationed there; thirdly, they appear to agree that access to West Berlin should be internationally guaranteed. In fact the dispute over Germany boils down to whether or not the East German authorities should or should not supervise the passage through Berlin territory of the internationally guaranteed traffic. In other words, the world is threatened with nuclear war, because the Great Powers cannot decide who should stamp whose passport on the route to Berlin." Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, p. 85.

<sup>893</sup> PA AA B34 340, Lüders to Foreign Office, 19.09.1962.

<sup>894</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>895</sup> The message, sent on 2 August, reads as follows: „Osagyefo! It is providential that you have escaped that abominable attempt. Politicians who take refuge in such detestable means are nothing but criminals and deserve no mercy. I should like to let you, Osagyefo, and Madame Nkrumah know, how much I sympathize with you. May the Lord protect you forever that you can fulfil your historic mission in Africa. Signed: Dr. C.H. Lueders" TNA, DO 153/64, Statement, 19.09.1962. The *Ghanaian Times* speculated that Lüders knew of which "politicians" he was talking about.

French policy towards Africa.<sup>896</sup> The FRG's ambassador greatly welcomed the united Western front against the press allegations, and kept in close contact especially with the US embassy. Nonetheless, while Mahoney saw in the press campaign a move by the Soviet Union, which in his opinion was trying to win back the confidence it had recently lost, the West German ambassador focussed much more on Nkrumah's personality and psychology to explain the recent anti-Western polemics, as the British High Commission did.<sup>897</sup> Believing that the news articles had been entirely drafted at Flagstaff House, he described the Foreign Office what he saw as Nkrumah's "double-faced policy":

Nkrumah, who has carefully studied the propaganda-policy of Hitler and other nationalists, wishes to remain leader in the fight against imperialism and colonialism in the eyes of the radical nationalists of all African countries. He doesn't want reconciliation with the West, rather needs a clear opponent for the purpose of his nationalist propaganda struggle. This leads to the circumstance that on the radio and in the press he shows the face of an anti-Western, African nationalist, while in his real policy, especially in his economic policy, he follows the more authoritative course of apparently earnest non-alignment policy.<sup>898</sup>

So while at that time most Foreign Office officials regarded the events in Ghana exclusively in terms of the confrontation between the Federal Republic and East Germany in the developing world,<sup>899</sup> Lüders in a certain sense anticipated the tendency, established in the following months by Western diplomatics, of seeing in Nkrumah the only relevant political factor in Ghana, and every change in Ghana's policy line as evidence of Nkrumah's personal inclinations.<sup>900</sup> This "psychological turn" in the approach by the West German ambassador derived to a large extent from the conversations he had with two German physicians, first a certain Dr. Haaf, and later with a Dr. Hoffmann, who had both treated the Ghanaian president of his wounds in the wake of the Kulungugu attempt.<sup>901</sup>

From the first — chief physician of the Basler Mission's hospital — the ambassador learned that even while he was being operated to remove the splinters

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<sup>896</sup> PA AA B34 340, Lüders to Foreign Office, 19.09.1962.

<sup>897</sup> See chapter 1.4.

<sup>898</sup> Ibid.

<sup>899</sup> PA AA B34 159, Aufzeichnung, Steltzer, 19.09.1962.

<sup>900</sup> Cf. TNA DO 194/14.

<sup>901</sup> PA AA B34 339, Lüders to Foreign Office, 29.08.1962.

from his back, Nkrumah took the time to dictate the way in which the press should cover the event of the attack (the president's injuries were kept hidden to the public), which confirmed Lüders in his suspicions about the president's influence on the media. From the second, Public Medical Officer in Tamale, where Nkrumah had been brought to recover for a week after the attack, Lüders obtained instead a "complete" psychological profile of the Ghanaian leader. From his daily six hours of conversation with Nkrumah, Hoffmann first of all gained the impression that he was "emotionally focussed and not accessible to rational arguments." Moreover, Hoffmann maintained that Nkrumah's emotions were "determined by the experiences he has had during his ten-year stay in the United States," and presumed that "the treatment of the American Negroes left a trauma in him, which constitutes the basis of his fight against Western imperialism, colonialism and capitalism. An inferiority complex and/or hate against the white race are evident, although Nkrumah himself is perhaps not aware of this circumstance."<sup>902</sup>

The contradiction that, as the doctor acknowledged, Nkrumah had a very positive experience in the Soviet Union — a predominantly white country — or the fact that he was surrounded by all sorts of Caucasian advisers and assistants, did not pose a problem to Lüders. He summarized the psychological profile elaborated by this German physician, who had spent one week with Nkrumah, and reported it to the other heads of mission of the Federal Republic in Africa during the second ambassadors' conference in Entebbe, Uganda, as "the judgement of a European psychologist who knows Nkrumah very well from hours of conversation."<sup>903</sup> Overall, Ambassador Lüders' portrait of Nkrumah at the conference was that of a ruthless, double-faced, Marxist dictator, close friend of the GDR yet cynical enough to

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<sup>902</sup> Ibid.

<sup>903</sup> PA AA B1 260, Protokoll der Afrikakonferenz (29.10 - 03-11.1962), p. 42-46. Nkrumah did suffer from poverty, social exclusion and racial prejudice during his twelve years as a student in the United States, yet there is no evidence that he developed racist tendencies as a consequence of this, cf. Nkrumah, Kwame. *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957.

maintain diplomatic relations only with the economically more powerful Federal Republic.<sup>904</sup>

Facing collective protest, the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement according to which “in Ghana, as in other democratic countries, publicity organs, whether State-subsidised or not, have the freedom to write, state, interpret or reflect Government Policy without necessarily implying Government’s responsibility for their action.”<sup>905</sup> Of course neither London, Washington, nor Bonn would accept this, and so Nkrumah had to release a public statement of disavowal and regret for each of the three countries concerned (France had not reacted at all, apparently). In the case of West Germany, considering that he had been personally singled out, the ambassador insisted for a declaration coming directly from the president and not from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which Nkrumah would reaffirm his personal confidence in the representative of the Federal Republic.<sup>906</sup>

To be sure, the times in which the Foreign Office could consider Ghana as a nationalist but Western-friendly, non-aligned African country, were gone. While as of 1961 other situations which had previously aroused great concern in the Federal Republic, such as Guinea or the Congo, were considered as more stabilized, Ghana became more and more the problem child of Bonn’s policy for Africa south of the Sahara. Although Accra paid attention to keeping the intercourse with East Berlin below the threshold of the diplomatic relations at embassies’ level, the relationship with Ghana was nevertheless considered a sore point, which made it difficult for Bonn to exert the moderating influence its allies had hoped it would.

### **Concurring Factors - From Togo to the East Berlin Trade Mission**

As the FRG expanded its network of political and economic relations south of the Sahara, which included by then already twenty-eight independent states, it ran the

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<sup>904</sup> No wonder that Foreign Minister Gerhard Schröder stated that “all [African] states [Egypt was counted to the Middle East though, NB] have towards the Federal Republic a positive or at least neutral stand. Only Ghana’s attitude, at most, could be seen as negative.” PA AA B1 260, Protokoll der Afrikakonferenz (29.10 - 03-11.1962) in Entebbe, p. 174.

<sup>905</sup> TNA DO 153/64.

<sup>906</sup> PA AA B150 459, Lüders to Foreign Office, 25.09.1962.

risk to get entangled in the dynamics of regional rivalries. In the case of West Africa, the relations with its own ancient “model colony” Togo contributed to the deterioration of the relationship between Bonn and Accra. The relations between the two neighbours, Ghana and Togo, were difficult ever since on the eve of the latter’s independence from France in 1960, Nkrumah had begun claiming in public that the border dividing the two countries was “an anachronism,” and that soon after independence Togo would be incorporated into Ghana as seventh province.<sup>907</sup> Togo for its part irritated the Ghana government by harbouring political movements which aimed at, on the contrary, bringing about the unification of the Ewe people by annexing Ghana’s eastern Volta region with Togo.<sup>908</sup>

The tension eased somewhat after a visit by Nkrumah to Lomé in 1960; nonetheless, as a stream of political refugees from Ghana arrived in Togo in 1961, among these members of the opposition fighting Nkrumah’s regime, the atmosphere between Accra and Lomé could hardly be considered as cordial, especially after Ghana came under suspicion of having supported an attempt against Togo’s President Olympio.<sup>909</sup> In this context, it did not went unnoticed in Accra that Olympio was seeking closer ties to the Federal Republic of Germany as a way to build up the economy of his country, one of the smallest in Africa, to escape from the suffocating grip of French neocolonialism.

In January 1962 an editorial of Ghana’s *Evening News* hinted for the first time at the presence of “ex-Nazi Western German advisers” in Lomé.<sup>910</sup> In September, the ambassador of the Federal Republic to Togo, Alexander Török, aroused Ghana’s ire when, referring to the Ewe issue, he declared in a public speech that Togo had a reunification problem in the same way as Germany did, thus seemingly supporting Togo’s claims on the Volta region. Henceforth Ambassador Lüders and the Foreign

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<sup>907</sup> PA AA B34 74, Accra to Foreign Office, 06.11.1959.

<sup>908</sup> The Ewe, like the Ga-Adangme, is a people that was divided between Ghana and Togo when British Togoland was annexed to the former in 1957.

<sup>909</sup> PA AA B34 233, Lomé to Foreign Office, 07.12.1961; B34 236, Lomé to Foreign Office, 14.12.1961.

<sup>910</sup> „Olympio’s Nazi pranks will fail!“ *Evening News*, 25 January 1962.

Office interpreted the attacks against himself in the Ghanaian media also as a reprisal against these unhappy statements by the German ambassador in Togo.<sup>911</sup>

What the West Germans had not expected was that Nkrumah would try to influence the FRG's Togo policy, using the leverage of his relations with East Berlin. At the end of November the Federal Republic had sent to Togo the President of Schleswig-Holstein, Kai-Uwe von Hassel, to inaugurate the enlargement works for the harbour of Lomé, which Bonn was financing with a capital aid loan of DM 53 million.<sup>912</sup> When Nkrumah learned that West Germany was supporting one of Ghana's foremost regional rivals with a sum that amounted to almost three times the capital aid Ghana was receiving — what is more, for a project that posed a problem to Ghana since Lomé is a natural competitor to the harbour of Tema — he took it as a personal affront.

On 30 November, four days after von Hassel had left Togo, Nkrumah had the ambassador of the Federal Republic summoned to the foreign ministry to let him know that Ghana was about to employ a trade mission with consular rights in East Berlin.<sup>913</sup> The ambassador was reassured that the step did not imply the recognition of the GDR; nonetheless, the news raised great concern in Bonn, as only two non-aligned states had so far reciprocated the opening of GDR trade missions or consulates in their own states — Finland, which since the war enjoyed a special neutralist status, and the UAR.<sup>914</sup> As Nkrumah had expected, Bonn reacted immediately to the announcement and sent its ambassador to explore the chances that the step could be reversed, and, if yes, to learn what could be 'the price' for this. The FRG's main concern was that "other countries might follow Ghana's example," Under Secretary Carstens wrote.<sup>915</sup>

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<sup>911</sup> PA AA B150 460, Aufzeichnung, 06.10.1962.

<sup>912</sup> Engel, *Die Afrikapolitik*, p. 245.

<sup>913</sup> PA AA B150 466, Lüders to Foreign Office, 30.11.1962. It is true that, apparently, Ghana had not communicated its decision to GDR yet, which it did only in December, s. PA AA MfAA A 15976, *Jahresbericht 1962*, 10.01.1963, p. 7.

<sup>914</sup> The Foreign Office claimed furthermore that the mission of the UAR existed practically only on the paper, PA AA B150 467, Foreign Office to Accra, 01.12.1962.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*

One week later, Ambassador Lüders was received by Nkrumah at Flagstaff House. The Osagyefo declared that he considered West Germany's economic policy in Ghana as "an interference in the family dispute between Ghana and Togo," and that he expected the Federal Republic to abstain from further such acts, especially in case "complications" arose in the furtherance of the quarrel.<sup>916</sup> The ambassador, understanding the hint, excluded from the start the eventuality that the Federal Republic could reverse its credit for Togo so as to avoid the opening of the delegation in East Berlin.<sup>917</sup> He pressured Nkrumah to declare in a public statement that the opening of the trade mission did not imply recognition of the GDR. The Osagyefo however, who clearly had hoped to obtain some positive incentives at the political, proposed a second trade, namely that the Federal Government publicly declare that it viewed the differences between Ghana and Togo as a "family dispute," which could not be taken as reason for outsiders to interfere, in exchange for the statement demanded by Bonn.<sup>918</sup> Not unexpectedly, the Federal Republic refused to have its aid policy dictate by "any Nkrumah," as Lüders said in a dispatch.<sup>919</sup>

The Foreign Office tried to reverse the terms of the deal: the ambassador was instructed to tell Nkrumah that if Ghana went on with its declared purpose, the FRG's "goodwill" to further strengthen the economic cooperation would suffer.<sup>920</sup> The threat failed to yield results though. Shortly thereafter, Nkrumah confirmed the head of the Africa department of East Germany's foreign ministry, on visit in Accra, Ghana's intention to establish a trade mission in East Berlin; he also accepted the invitation for a CPP delegation to take part in the sixth congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) in January 1963.<sup>921</sup>

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<sup>916</sup> PA AA B150 467, Lüders to Foreign Office, 06.12.1962. It is possible that Nkrumah knew about the upcoming coup d'état in Togo, and wanted to avoid any involvement of the Federal Republic in the affair.

<sup>917</sup> PA AA B150 467, Lüders to Foreign Office, 07.12.1962.

<sup>918</sup> Ibid.

<sup>919</sup> PA AA B150 467, Lüders to Foreign Office, 07.12.1962. In all these passages Lüders kept constantly in touch with his US colleague Mahoney. The same did the West German ambassador in Lomé; however, the US ambassador in Togo forwarded details of Nkrumah's proposals to the FRG to Olympio, without informing Török, which raised bewilderment in Bonn. PA AA B150 468, Foreign Office to Accra, 18.12.1962.

<sup>920</sup> PA AA B130 3620A, Carstens to Accra, 08.12.1962.

<sup>921</sup> PA AA B34 341, Lüders to Foreign Office, 05.12.1962.

Thus, the decision had been made. Negotiations continued on the declaration of non-recognition Bonn expected the Ghanaian government to release at the same time with the announcement on the East Berlin trade mission. The Foreign Office drafted an aide mémoire to be submitted to Nkrumah with the FRG's official line on the matter. It made no mention of a possible exchange of notes, as Nkrumah wanted, but instructed Lüders to explore the possibility that a delegation led by a high official of the ministry pay a visit to Accra to iron out the differences, as had been done for Guinea two years before.<sup>922</sup> At first, after meeting with the two deputies of the foreign minister, the ambassador reported positive signals coming from Accra, and thought that maybe Nkrumah wanted to keep the trade mission matter pending.<sup>923</sup> However, after a successive meeting with Foreign Minister Dei-Anang, Lüders had to give up all residual hope to reverse Nkrumah's decision or to obtain a non-recognition declaration. Dei-Anang told him that after four-and-a-half years of "friendly cooperation," they could not refuse the GDR "this little gesture"; moreover, the FRG had brought this affair upon itself, he said, with the credit for Togo, "which had really shocked Nkrumah."<sup>924</sup>

### **Easing Tensions - Lüders' Farewell**

With the failure of the negotiations, as the GDR trade mission of in Ghana celebrated the fulfilment of all main political objectives for 1962,<sup>925</sup> the Federal Republic found itself compelled to further the warning it had issued to Ghana, that sending a trade delegate to East Germany would compromise "well-balanced, friendly relations" between the two countries, and that the Federal Republic's will to expand economic cooperation with Ghana would come to a halt in such a case.<sup>926</sup>

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<sup>922</sup> PA AA B150 469, Aufzeichnung, 21.12.1962.

<sup>923</sup> PA AA B150 469, Lüders to Foreign Office, 21.12.1962. The two deputy ministers stressed especially the value for Ghana of the proposed investment by a West German consortium in a cocoa processing plant, for which Hermes-credits were needed.

<sup>924</sup> PA AA B150 469, Lüders to Foreign Office, 27.12.1962.

<sup>925</sup> PA AA MfAA A 15976, Jahresbericht 1962, 10.01.1963, p. 7.

<sup>926</sup> PA AA B130 3620A, Carstens to Accra, 08.12.1962.



Although Lüders recommended to downplay the affair in terms of public relations, it was agreed in Bonn that Ghana's behaviour could not be tacitly accepted, or other African states could possibly follow the lead. So various retaliatory measures were envisaged, such as the cancellation of technical aid projects, investments guarantees, the DM 20 million credit which now Ghana wanted to employ to build a bridge on the Volta at Tefle, even a "cocoa embargo."<sup>927</sup> In any case, the Foreign Office knew that all options would be effective only if carried out in coordination with the United States and with Britain. So they instructed the ambassador to consult his US colleague in Accra, while contacts at higher level were initiated too.<sup>928</sup> In the meantime, all applications by Ghana for aid were put on hold, pending political clarification.

Ghana's polemics against the West simmered down somewhat as of February 1963, due to economic pressure by the United States, and the tactful dealing of the matter by President Kennedy, who kept at his epistolary exchange with Nkrumah [see 2.3]. While in December the *Ghanaian Times* still railed against alleged attempts by Western neocolonialism to subvert the government,<sup>929</sup> about two months later the Ghanaian media kept the tone much lower. Though he had to pursue some further démarches at the foreign ministry for attacks in the press, Ambassador Lüders felt that overall, Ghana had entered a phase of moderation, thanks to the US suasion campaign.<sup>930</sup>

Interestingly enough, the fact that a coup d'état had taken place in neighbouring Togo, leading to the elimination of one of Nkrumah's principal regional adversaries, was not mentioned in the reports of the embassy as a possible reason for this détente. In any case, nothing was heard of the Ghanaian trade delegate for East Berlin for many months. The spring of 1963 brought also some changes in diplomatic posts which were relevant to FRG-Ghana relations. In March, a succession took place at Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as Nkrumah's old fellow traveller Kojo Botsio

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<sup>927</sup> PA AA B130 3620A, Aufzeichnung (Entwurf), 14.1.1963.

<sup>928</sup> Ibid.

<sup>929</sup> "American and Germans want Nkrumah removed." *Ghanaian Times*, 31 December 1962.

<sup>930</sup> PA AA B34 409, Anlage zum Bericht, 13.02.1963.

replaced Dei-Anang.<sup>931</sup> The new appointment was saluted in the West, as he was a personality known to be used to contacts with Europeans. During a press conference in June, it was also noted that Botsio had publicly distanced himself from the leftist campaigns in the media.<sup>932</sup>

Practically in the same weeks as Botsio entered the foreign ministry, Ambassador Lüders wished Accra goodbye. Since January he had begun an exchange with the Africa department at the Foreign Office, asking for a decision as to whether he would come back or not to Ghana after his holiday in April. In the end, considering also that Ghana's press got wind of Lüders' contacts with the opposition during the strike of 1961, Bonn decided on his own suggestion to withdraw him, so as to allow for more relaxed contacts with the regime in Accra. After his last meeting with Nkrumah, Lüders confirmed that Ghana was presently keeping a more peaceful line towards the West and the Federal Republic. Nkrumah told him he had instructed the press to abstain from direct attacks against Bonn; in regard to the trade mission in the GDR he only said: "Drop it; we have got other problems in the meantime."<sup>933</sup>

Of course, the departing ambassador warned against taking this as a fundamentally changed attitude on the part of Nkrumah and his regime. He recommended for the future to take a firm stand whenever a particularly unfriendly attitude towards the Federal Republic arose, and to keep permanently at hand a major development project of particular interest to Nkrumah as insurance policy. He also stressed that the FRG had no choice but to "remain economically attractive to Ghana, if we want to avoid that Nkrumah recognize the SOZ," since the latter enjoyed much more of Nkrumah's sympathy than the Federal Republic did.<sup>934</sup>

The FRG remained buyer number three of Ghanaian produce, and exporter number four to Ghana. However, the massive investments by the West German consortium of enterprises envisaged in the 1959 agreements had not materialized as expected, which

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<sup>931</sup> Armah, *Peace without Power*, p. 20.

<sup>932</sup> PA AA B34 408, Brühl, 19.06.1963.

<sup>933</sup> PA AA B34 410, Lüders to Foreign Office, 26.03.1963.

<sup>934</sup> PA AA B34 408, Lüders to Foreign Office, 25.03.1963.

led to disappointment in Ghana.<sup>935</sup> For the part of development aid, because of the bureaucratic delays in the negotiations between the two governments and the stops caused by the political difficulties, keeping at Lüders' recommendation to always have a major project to wave in Ghana's face was difficult for West Germany.

In mid-May, Nkrumah's adviser on economic affairs Ayeh-Kumi finally signed in Bonn the agreement with the Federal Government that sealed the DM 20 million grant for the construction of the bridge on the Volta at Tefle.<sup>936</sup> This was good news for the relations between the Federal Republic and Ghana, as it strengthened the ties between the two countries and signaled Bonn's desire to contribute to Ghana's economic development. On the other hand, it was not a huge project divided in several stages like the Volta scheme; in the moment the agreement was signed, the project lost part of its value as source of political leverage. For some time the FRG had to rely mostly on technical aid initiatives, especially Reitsch's gliding school, and on scholarships for Ghanaian students, to demonstrate concretely its friendly attitude, while it hoped that the United States would keep at its influence on Nkrumah. While the West Germans had been 'invited' into Ghana to help keep it Western-friendly, it was now the FRG which depended on help from its allies to keep Ghana's flirtations with the GDR at bay.

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<sup>935</sup> PA AA B34 388, Lüders to Foreign Office, 16.05.1962.

<sup>936</sup> PA AA B68 192. The agreement contained also a protocol on maritime relations, and exchange of letters on civil aviation matters.

### 3.3 Intermezzo - Ambassador Reichhold

#### Count Brühl, Hanna Reitsch, and West Germany's New Ambassador

In the last phase of Lüders' mandate, because of the attacks against him in the press and the strong *démarches* he had to undertake, his personal contacts with Nkrumah were not as frequent. The political role of Hanna Reitsch henceforth grew considerably. Nkrumah realized that she was an earnest admirer of his personality, and that she was giving a strong contribution to Ghana's technical development.<sup>937</sup> Reitsch became a close confidant of his, who could use her privileged position also to strengthen the ties between West Germany and Ghana, although her thinly-veiled contempt for democracy remained embarrassing for West Germany in terms of public relations.<sup>938</sup> Especially the young *chargé* who took over from Lüders, Count Brühl, accepted willingly her intromission into diplomatic affairs, as he considered her influence "of great usefulness."<sup>939</sup> When Reitsch proposed that her mentor at the Foreign Office, the head of the cultural department Dieter Sattler, should come to visit Ghana and meet the president, Brühl supported the idea with enthusiasm.

Sattler was the first high-ranking official of the West German Foreign Office to come on visit to Ghana, and the trip was considered an outright success for Bonn's diplomacy. Sattler, for the occasion nominated "extraordinary ambassador," received a VIP-treatment, including a private dinner only with the president, his wife, and Reitsch.<sup>940</sup> The latter's influence went so far as to obtaining from Nkrumah to change the text of the speech he was going to hold at the gliding school, which was receiving a new glider offered by the Federal Republic. Nkrumah was about to say that the friendly relations between Ghana and West Germany nearly had been "destroyed by the misrepresentation of Ghana in the West German press." Reitsch convinced him

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<sup>937</sup> Lüders reckoned that Nkrumah had found in Reitsch "balsam for his shredded heart." PA AA B94 231, Lüders to Foreign Office, 20.02.1963.

<sup>938</sup> PA AA B94 231, Lüders to Foreign Office, 20.03.1963.

<sup>939</sup> PA AA B34 410, Brühl to Steltzer, 08.05.1963; PA AA B94 231, Brühl to Foreign Office, 24.04.1963.

<sup>940</sup> PA AA B150 7, Sattler, 06.06.1963.

that this would create an embarrassment to her government — which after all was paying for her salary — and so in the end the speech mentioned only “the Western press” generically, without a specific reference to Germany.<sup>941</sup>

Of course, the influence of Reitsch on Nkrumah and her interference in political affairs were not always easy to handle for Bonn and for the diplomats on the spot. In a letter addressed personally to one high official of the Foreign Office, Reitsch spoke of the chargé d'affaires in Accra as “a wonderful, valuable person, yet maladroit, incapable of speaking, and what is more, he looks like a boy, not like the Representative of the Federal Republic”; she solicited the arrival of a new ambassador.<sup>942</sup> After only three months of regency, a new representative of the Federal Republic thus arrived in Accra. Bonn probably knew that Ghana was too much of a hotspot to leave it for many months to a young chargé; in any case, sending quickly a replacement could be used to demonstrate lively interest by the Federal Republic towards Ghana.<sup>943</sup>

Walter Reichhold was an experienced diplomat, who had represented the FRG in Senegal since 1955 first as consul then as ambassador, also with accreditations for Mauritania, Portuguese Guinea and British Gambia.<sup>944</sup> After his first meeting with Nkrumah, which took place on 24 July 1963 at Flagstaff House — by the way, the ambassador compared the residence to Hitler’s bunker — Reichhold described him as being “softer, and thus more vulnerable, than e.g. Senghor, Sékou Touré and Modibo Keita,” but also more idealistic and convinced of his own “charismatic mission.” He stressed that “undoubtedly, he wishes to involve us more in the development of Ghana. On the other side, he seems quite capable, if the Federal Republic undertakes

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<sup>941</sup> PA AA B34 411, Brühl to Foreign Office, 21.05.1963. Cf. PA AA B94 231.

<sup>942</sup> PA AA B94 231, Reitsch to Jansen, 29.04.1963.

<sup>943</sup> The Foreign Office suggested the ambassador to use this argument in his presentation speech, PA AA B34 410, Foreign Office to Reichhold, 05.06.1963. It should also be noted though, that the chargé himself, Count Brühl, solicited Bonn for political reasons not to wait more than two or three months to send a replacement for Lüders, *ibid.*, Brühl to Steltzer, 03.04.1963.

<sup>944</sup> Internationales Biographisches Archiv 23/1981, [www.munzinger.de](http://www.munzinger.de) [22.05.2014].

steps in Africa that he considers a threat, of being the first to recognize two German states.”<sup>945</sup>

Reichhold’s relationship with Reitsch however would prove much more difficult than Brühl’s. Apparently the main bone of the contention was the issue of the Ghanaian trade mission, which arose again after it almost seemed to have been forgotten. In point of fact, the details regarding Ghana’s “Economic and Trade Mission” in East Berlin had been already arranged with an exchange of letters between the GDR’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Otto Winzer and Nkrumah in April, on the occasion of a “courtesy visit” paid by the former to Accra.<sup>946</sup>

Ghana had avoided though to raise any particular attention to the matter and delayed the sending of the trade commissioner, in the hope that this would keep the expected negative reactions of the Federal Republic at a tolerable level.<sup>947</sup> On 27 August the embassy of the Federal Republic reported to Bonn that the designated head the trade mission, J. Mensah Bonsu, had started his journey from London to the GDR. Much to the surprise of the ambassador in Accra and his Western colleagues, the Foreign Office failed to show though any particular reaction. Two weeks later, Reichhold, puzzled by the lack of directions, asked Bonn to be recalled for consultations.<sup>948</sup>

### **The Ghanaian Trade Delegation in East Berlin and its Backlash**

Apart from recalling its representative, the reaction of the Federal Republic was remarkably mild. The head of the Africa department in a note to the embassy played down the political relevance of the episode, stressing that the exercise of “limited consular functions by the trade mission of the SOZ in Accra is politically disagreeable [...] but does not imply from the point of view of international law a recognition of the SOZ as state by the Republic of Ghana,” and advised against

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<sup>945</sup> PA AA B34 410, Reichhold to Foreign Office, 25.07.1963.

<sup>946</sup> Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, p. 74.

<sup>947</sup> The Foreign Office appreciated that the Ghanaian press release on Winzer’s visit focussed on economic matters and minimized its political relevance, PA AA B34 409, *Aufzeichnung*, 13.05.1963.

<sup>948</sup> PA AA B34 409, Reichhold to Lahr, 11.09.1963.

further démarches at the foreign ministry on this aspect.<sup>949</sup> The Foreign Office seemed to be satisfied by the assurance made by Ghana in an aide mémoire that “the Trade Representation would have no diplomatic or consular status,” and that Bonsu, a specialist “of commercial and industrial activities,” would be in East Berlin only “to cater for the commercial interests of Ghana including the welfare of a number of Ghanaian students who are at present pursuing various courses of education in East Germany.”<sup>950</sup>

In a circular to the FRG’s African embassies, the Foreign Office stretched the truth somewhat, highlighting that the mission responded to the Ghanaian ministry for trade and not the foreign ministry (which was true) and that it exercised no diplomatic or consular functions (which was not true). To avoid that “other African states might follow Ghana’s lead,” the embassies were recommended to remind their countries of mission that, although the Federal Republic would honour its present aid commitments, no further projects would be approved for Ghana in the near future because of the disappointment in West German public opinion.<sup>951</sup>

Historians still wonder today why Bonn in the end reacted as mildly as it did to Ghana’s decision to open a trade delegation in East Germany, which was after all a rather bold step — only two other non-communist countries had dared so far to send official representatives to the GDR.<sup>952</sup> Kilian in particular argues that Bonn’s behaviour was influenced by four possible reasons:

a) Feelings of guilt for a DM 100-million credit recently granted to South Africa, which had raised sharp reactions in Ghana;<sup>953</sup>

b) The circumstance that Accra remained below the threshold of consular or diplomatic relations, hence could not be accused of violating the Hallstein Doctrine;

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<sup>949</sup> PA AA B34 413, 18.09.1963, Steltzer to Accra, 18.09.1963.

<sup>950</sup> PA AA B34 413, Aide Memoire, 30.09.1963.

<sup>951</sup> PA AA B34 413, Rundschreiben, 04.10.1963.

<sup>952</sup> Kilian, Die Hallstein-Doktrin, p. 105.

<sup>953</sup> Cf. “Bonn offers £66m credit to Pretoria regime.” *Ghanaian Times*, August 13, 1963. The Portuguese-friendly statements of the vice-president of the Bundestag caused further uproar in Ghana, PA AA B34 409, Reichhold to Bonn, 06.09.1963.

c) The GDR-press avoided any great fanfare around the episode, making it easier for the Federal Republic to play it down;

d) Alleged signals Ambassador Reichhold had sent to the Ghanaians, to say that a trade mission would have been all right to West Germany, since it did not imply diplomatic recognition for the GDR.<sup>954</sup>

These are all plausible causal factors, though it should also be reminded that Ghana's Foreign Minister Botsio travelled to Bonn and agreed to a joint communiqué, in which it was declared that the step did not imply a recognition of the GDR. The fourth point, i.e. Reichhold's role, can be questioned however, based on the documentary evidence on this period of Ghanaian-West German relations in the PA AA.

The possible sources of the allegations against Reichhold are two: Foreign Minister Botsio, and Hanna Reitsch. Defending Ghana's decision to open the delegation, Botsio in particular reminded his colleague Schröder during a meeting on 9 October in Bonn that

when over one year ago the Ghanaian government took the decision to establish [...] a trade mission in East Berlin, the German embassy was informed about it. Furthermore, the German ambassador was again notified, *before the head of this mission was appointed* [italics added]. The German ambassador was not very happy about this development, yet he [Botsio] had assured him that it was only a trade delegation and that relations were non-diplomatic in kind.<sup>955</sup>

As it is possible to see, the minister does not mention the name of the ambassador he had spoken with about the issue. Based on an interpretation in the collection of Foreign Office documents *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1963*, Kilian assumes that it is Ambassador Reichhold he is referring to; as a matter of fact, it is his predecessor Lüders. Mensah Bonsu, the trade delegate in East Germany, was appointed to his position already in March, well before Reichhold arrived in Accra — and the Foreign Office had received information of this through

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<sup>954</sup> Kilian, Die Hallstein-Doktrin, p. 76-77.

<sup>955</sup> PA AA B34 411, Aufzeichnung, 10.10.1963.



Lüders.<sup>956</sup> While it is theoretically possible that Botsio was confusing dates and names, his statement to the West German foreign minister is consistent with the aide mémoire presented by Ghana's foreign ministry on the issue, which only refers to Lüders as the ambassador who had been notified on 13 February 1963 of the intention to establish a trade mission in the GDR, and that "Mr. J. Mensah Bonsu had been earmarked for the post of Ghana's Trade Representative."<sup>957</sup>

Since we can thus exclude Botsio's words as evidence against Ambassador Reichhold, it remains the question why Hanna Reitsch decided, on 14 September, to write a letter to Dieter Sattler and Hans-Georg Steltzer, respectively heads of the culture and Africa department at the Foreign Office, denouncing the ambassador in Accra as "a catastrophe," whose inaptness had fundamentally brought about Ghana's decision on the East German mission.<sup>958</sup> Unfortunately, there are gaps in the documentation of the correspondence between Ambassador Reichhold and Bonn — in general, and especially for the period of summer-fall 1963. It is therefore not possible to give here a definitive answer to the question of what really led Hanna Reitsch, in the six weeks between Reichhold's accreditation in July and early September, to such harsh a judgement on this experienced and tactful diplomat.

What is sure is that from the start there was no good feeling between the two. Reichhold, though a jurist, during the war had worked as interpreter for the Foreign Office instead of pursuing a diplomatic or political career; he had never been a Nazi party member, to the contrary of many of his colleagues.<sup>959</sup> He boasted in public about "not having served Hitler," while Reitsch was at times rather outspoken in her apology of the Third Reich, and claimed that a form of "national socialism" was just what Ghana needed at this stage of its development.<sup>960</sup> It is definitely plausible, as

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<sup>956</sup> In a report of 16 March, Lüders told Bonn that according to State Secretary Asante, the designated trade delegate, Mensah Bonsu, would be sent to Berlin after the Leipzig Fair, PA AA B34 409, 16.03.1963.

<sup>957</sup> PA AA B34 413, Aide Memoire, 30.09.1963.

<sup>958</sup> Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, p. 77. Cf. Lindemann, Mechthild, and Ilse Dorothee Pautsch. *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1963* (thereinafter, AAPD). Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993, p. 1146-1149.

<sup>959</sup> Internationales Biographisches Archiv 23/1981, [www.munzinger.de](http://www.munzinger.de) [22.05.2014]. For the record: Hanna Reitsch had never been Party member either.

<sup>960</sup> „Diplomat-Schöön. Deutschland und seine Diplomaten.“ *Stern-Magazin* Nr.24, 14.06.1964. Nkrumah in fact was interested in Hitler as a possible source of inspiration for his regime. He told Ambassador Lüders that he considered him a "great historical figure," PA AA B34 410, Lüders to Nkrumah, 26.03.1963. Reitsch surely nurtured this view. It

Bonn in fact presumed, that he voiced out loud his deprecation for Reitsch's role and her relation with Ghana's "Führer," and that she came to know of this.<sup>961</sup> Can we conclude from this that Reitsch decided to pay him back by defamation?<sup>962</sup> In any case, considering that all major decisions regarding the trade mission in East Berlin were taken by Ghana in concert with the GDR between December 1962 and May 1963, before Reichhold was even sent to Accra, any relevant responsibility by him in this matter can be reasonably excluded.

### **"No Fuel to the Flames"? The Demise of Reichhold's Approach**

Between 1962 and 1966 there were, de facto, two ambassadors of the Federal Republic in Ghana — as Lüders told Nkrumah with a touch of bitterness, one "gliding ambassador between heaven and earth" (Reitsch), and the other who had the more prosaic task "to empty the dust-bin" whenever it risked to overflow.<sup>963</sup> Clearly, a dispute between the two risked to weaken the FRG's political position; considering that Reitsch was untouchable due to her closeness to the Osagyefo, the feud between her and Ambassador Reichhold ended up doing more harm to his stand and credibility than to hers.<sup>964</sup>

What is more, Reichhold got entangled in a bitter quarrel also with the press attaché of his own embassy, Dietrich Löwe. After the opening of the GDR trade mission in Accra in 1959, as part of the Federal Republic's increased effort to stem against the tide of East German propaganda, a public relations officer had already been dispatched to the embassy.<sup>965</sup> Apparently, Löwe was quite successful in his public relations job. According to a reportage published in 1964, everybody knew him in Accra, "not as a German diplomat but as a 'friend from Germany'"; among

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appears that she forwarded to Nkrumah some photos of a certain "A.H." as well as the English edition of a book "out of print, because of the Secret Service" (*Mein Kampf*), PRAAD RG 17/1/163, Reitsch to Nkrumah, 27.04.1962.

<sup>961</sup> Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, p. 78.

<sup>962</sup> This would also confirm the assessment made by the Foreign Office at the time, that Reitsch's letter was influenced by the "differences" she was having with Reichhold, s. AAPD, 1963, p. 1146-1149.

<sup>963</sup> PA AA B34 410, Lüders to Foreign Office, 26.03.1963.

<sup>964</sup> Reichhold was recalled to Bonn in September and confronted, among other, with Reitsch's accusations. AAPD, 1963, p. 1149. Unfortunately, as it seems no record of these discussions has survived in the Federal Archives.

<sup>965</sup> PA AA B34 136, Stein to Foreign Office, 22.08.1960.

other things, he was instrumental in sending over five-hundred Ghanaian youths to the Federal Republic for vocational training and education.<sup>966</sup>

It seems though that in his effort to make contacts with the Ghanaian press, Löwe crossed at times the thin boundary which separates the usual influencing of personalities by dinners and parties, and outright corruption. Already in May 1963, before a new ambassador arrived, the East German delegation in Accra reported: “the West German press attaché has succeeded in bribing the editor-in-chief of the ‘Ghanaian Times’ through gifts in money and in kind.”<sup>967</sup> This kind of tactics ran against the approach that Ambassador Reichhold had decided he wanted to keep in containing the influence of the East Germans among Ghana’s journalists. Reichhold’s communication strategy rested on two mainly negative pillars: (1) avoid “adding fuel to the flames,” and (2) avoid “behaving exceedingly friendly or servilely vis-à-vis the Ghanaians.”

In Reichhold’s view, latter principle was violated when Löwe tried to develop friendly relations to single journalists, even those “brand-marked as communists,” inviting them to “countless house-parties and dinners.”<sup>968</sup> Thus few months after his accreditation, Reichhold was demanding the replacement of the embassy’s public relations officer, whom he also despised also because of his past as U-Boot officer during the war.<sup>969</sup>

By 1963 the West German embassy, instead of focussing on how to strengthen economic ties between the FRG and Ghana, was involved in a sort of chess game against the trade delegation of the GDR. Having lost though one knight (Löwe), and with his queen (Reitsch) openly hostile, Reichhold’s defensive strategy was bound not to bear fruits. Although the friends of the West in the Ghanaian government tried to keep the East Germans and their requests at bay, after the opening of the Ghanaian mission in East Berlin new consular prerogatives were granted to the GDR delegation in Accra, such as the right to send and receive diplomatic cables, and the possibility

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<sup>966</sup> „Diplomat-Schöön. Deutschland und seine Diplomaten.“ *Stern-Magazin* Nr.24, 14.06.1964.

<sup>967</sup> PA AA MfAA A 14408, Kern to MfAA, 15.05.1963.

<sup>968</sup> PA AA B34 408, Reichhold to Foreign Office, 27.11.1963.

<sup>969</sup> „Diplomat-Schöön. Deutschland und seine Diplomaten.“ *Stern-Magazin* Nr.24, 14.06.1964.

to permanently carry the national flag (which the West Germans called “secessionists’ flag”) on the delegation’s building.<sup>970</sup>

Reichhold was a valid diplomat, but the time he spent in a quite different African context, namely Senegal under President Senghor, had probably given him little preparation for the tough, Cold-War style in Ghana. The strategy he adopted was basically damage control, as he considered that the Federal Republic had no real way to oppose the communists in Nkrumah’s immediate entourage who steered the press attacks against the West. What in his opinion the embassy could do, apart from protesting against single, specific articles of particular gravity, was to avoid making things worse, and remaining “loyal partners” on the economic side.<sup>971</sup> As he told a West German reporter: “In a dictatorship, the German ambassador behaves best like the senior civil servant during the Third Reich: he waits for the Führer to get reasonable at last.”<sup>972</sup>

### **3.4 The FRG and the Last Phase of the Nkrumah Regime**

#### **Bonn Strikes Back**

Over the first quarter of 1964, the West German embassy in Accra was mostly busy reporting attacks against the Federal Republic in the Ghanaian press.<sup>973</sup> Luckily for Bonn, the beginning of the works for the Tefle bridge, the first major infrastructural project financed by West German capital aid in Ghana, offered the chance to highlight the tightening cooperation between the two countries. Nkrumah

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<sup>970</sup> PA AA, MfAA A 15976, Handelsvertretung an MfAA, 11.12.1963, 158. The West German ambassador himself had to admit that the position of the GDR delegation had improved in 1963, s. B34 488, Reichhold to Foreign Office, 02.01.1964.

<sup>971</sup> PA AA B34 408, Reichhold to Foreign Office, 27.11.1963.

<sup>972</sup> „Diplomat-Schön. Deutschland und seine Diplomaten.“ *Stern-Magazin* Nr.24, 14.06.1964.

<sup>973</sup> The most vociferous of Ghana’s militant media was the weekly *The Spark / L’Étincelle* (from the name of the newspaper edited by Lenin before the revolution), released by the Bureau of African Affairs and distributed to all Ghanaian embassies in Africa, which even went so far as to demand the outright recognition of the GDR by Ghana and the establishment of diplomatic relations. PA AA B34 484, Verbalnote, 07.04.1964. See e.g. “Bonn: Ennemi de l’Afrique,” 05.01.1964; “West German Neo-colonialism in Africa,” 21.02.1964.

sent out an invitation for the foreign minister of the Federal Republic to take part in the inauguration of the construction site.<sup>974</sup> Bonn dispatched instead Under Secretary Lahr, who took the chance of the visit for an extended round of talks with the Osagyefo and with Foreign Minister Botsio, so as to establish in particular whether further aid could be justified or not.<sup>975</sup>

Lahr, who carried a message by the FRG's Federal President to Nkrumah to make him look higher-ranking in terms of protocol,<sup>976</sup> and was escorted in his trip by Steltzer from the Africa department, took part in two meetings with Foreign Minister Botsio and in one with President Nkrumah, and held a speech at the foundation stone ceremony for the Volta bridge at Tefle. Considering Ghanaian standards in that period, according to which the FRG was counted to the "typically neo-colonialist states," the visit brought some fairly good press coverage for the Federal Republic.<sup>977</sup> It showed Bonn that while it could not be expected, at least in the short term, to change the regime's fundamental attitude, it was possible, by combining visible aid with stronger public relations initiatives, to mitigate Accra's irritation for the FRG's trade and military relations with Portugal and South Africa, and keep East German influence in the media at a tolerable level.

Pragmatist Ghanaians such as Botsio remained aware of the importance of keeping friendly relations with the industrialized Western nations. During their first encounter, Lahr and the foreign minister dealt with various controversial political issues, from the German question — Botsio, to Lahr's chagrin, said he hoped it could be solved by discussions between "the two parts of Germany" — to Portuguese colonialism and colonialism, which Lahr said the Federal Republic did not support.

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<sup>974</sup> PA AA B34 486, Lahr an Westrick (draft, n.d.).

<sup>975</sup> PA AA B34 486, Aufzeichnung, Sachs, 07.04.1964. The political affairs department at the Foreign Office, *Abteilung I*, expressed in connection with Lahr's journey a negative view in regard to granting of fresh aid. Moreover, it was recommended that Lahr pay a visit also to more Western-friendly countries in West Africa, such as the Ivory Coast, so as not to show too much public interest for Ghana, PA AA B34 485, Aufzeichnung, Jansen 09.04.1964.

<sup>976</sup> PA AA B34 486, Lahr to Westrick, n.d.

<sup>977</sup> PA AA B34 486, Reichhold to Foreign Office, 08.05.1964.

The tone of the conversation remained relaxed though, as both interlocutors seemed to accept the legitimacy of the others' point of view.<sup>978</sup>

Nkrumah in this sense was more difficult as dialogue partner. During the meeting they had on 28 April, he seemed weary at times of the subtlety of diplomatic language, and anxious to prove Lahr his dialectical and intellectual superiority. When right at the outset Lahr said that the relations between their two countries were "good, but not as good that they might not be improved," Nkrumah retorted that this "could not be the case" — the relations were not "bad," as Lahr contended, there were only tendentious press reports on both sides, which unfortunately both governments seemed to be unable to stop, causing "occasional difficulties." Lahr however said he wished to "go around like Diogenes with the lamp and search for those domains, where there is not full agreement yet."<sup>979</sup>

There were enough of those, in fact — from South Africa, which Nkrumah said "they knew Germany supported," to the partition of Germany, seen by Ghana as the result of the global struggle between socialism and capitalism, while Lahr blamed the partition on the regime in "central Germany" and the Soviet Union.<sup>980</sup> In regard to the Hallstein Doctrine and its principles, the exchange of views on the occasion of Lahr's visit had more informative character. Nkrumah was actually convinced that there were "other African states which entertain political relations with the GDR," and mentioned Egypt, Guinea and Mali in this respect.<sup>981</sup> The under secretary corrected him, as none had actually had established diplomatic relations with East Berlin as yet, although he had to concede that the island of Zanzibar recently had.<sup>982</sup>

Lahr's visit was a success in terms of public relations. Ghana seemed less inclined by that time to whims in regard to the German question. The Federal Republic remained wary however. Bonn wished to put Ghana's attitude to the test in the following

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<sup>978</sup> PA AA B34 485, Aufzeichnung, 28.04.1964. Cf. AAPD, 1964, Lahr to Schröder, p. 497.

<sup>979</sup> PA AA B34 485, Aufzeichnung, 30.04.1964.

<sup>980</sup> Lahr even disputed that the Federal Republic was a capitalist regime, stressing that the FRG's economy was not capitalistic anymore but a "social market economy" (*soziale Marktwirtschaft*), in which every social class could aspire to "what it is entitled to." Ibid.

<sup>981</sup> AAPD, 1964, Lahr to Schröder, p. 498.

<sup>982</sup> See Engel/Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten*, p. 151 ff.

months, especially in crucial moments such as the conferences of the non-aligned movement. When Botsio during a second meeting with Lahr declared that Ghana was ready now to take up credits for up to £200 million in the context of the seven-year plan, the under secretary bought time and proposed to wait until the end of the Kennedy Round conference in Geneva.<sup>983</sup> In the following months, the Federal Government declared though its availability to finance DM 10 million more worth of projects in Ghana.<sup>984</sup>

The West Germans had good reason to remain cautious. Foreign Minister Botsio was considered more West- than East-oriented, and yet he did not disdain contacts with the GDR. In the summer of 1964 he spent four weeks in East Germany for an extended health check up at the university clinic in Leipzig, in the course of which he met with a number of prominent political personalities, from Deputy Prime Minister Götting to the Vice Foreign Ministers Kiesewetter and Winzer.<sup>985</sup> The Foreign Office took exception to this trip and told the Ghanaian ambassador in Bonn that they did not accept the excuse of a medical visit — “the Ghanaians would not believe us,” they said, “if Federal Minister Schröder travelled to Pretoria and declared he had an appointment with the dentist in Johannesburg.”<sup>986</sup>

Botsio’s behaviour confirmed the Foreign Office that there was much too gain but also much to loose in Ghana, and that for this reason it was crucial to have a man on the spot who got the pulse of the situation; clearly, Ambassador Reichhold was not that person. The last straw, which moved the Foreign Office to pursue a replacement, was a story published by the widely-read magazine *Stern* in June 1964. Here, the deficiencies of West Germany’s political strategy in Ghana were revealed to the public stark and naked. The article described Reichhold as the wrong man in an

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<sup>983</sup> PA AA B34 485, Aufzeichnung, 30.04.1964.

<sup>984</sup> PA AA B34 485, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 09.10.1964.

<sup>985</sup> Kilian, Die Hallstein-Doktrin, p. 71-72.

<sup>986</sup> The ambassador, clearly embarrassed, said that the episode represented a “heavy blow” for him, PA AA B34 489, Aufzeichnung, 29.07.1964. The Foreign Office suspected that Botsio had discussed the upgrading of the East German trade mission to a consulate general, in exchange for certain “quid pro quo,” *ibid.*, Memorandum, n.d. The Ghanaian ambassador travelled to Leipzig to see Botsio and allegedly to tell him that Nkrumah, who had been surprised by the strong West German reaction, wanted him back in Accra as soon as possible, *ibid.*, Steltzer, 06.08.1964. Nonetheless, Botsio remained in East Germany until the end of August, and met even the President of the State Council, Walter Ulbricht, see “Walter Ulbricht empfing ghanesischen Außenminister.“ *Neues Deutschland*, 29.08.1964.

important place, trying to pursue “the wrong policy with wrong means and wrong people,” while Hanna Reitsch was dubbed as “the real ambassador of the Federal Republic in Ghana,” who deserved the credit for having avoided thus far that Accra recognize the East German regime. The ambassador of the Federal Republic was even quoted as saying that he had come to Africa only to ensure himself and his family the full diplomatic pension.<sup>987</sup>

After one capable but perhaps too impulsive ambassador such as Lüders, and one like Reichhold who clearly felt himself in the wrong place, Bonn needed to send quickly someone to Accra it could trust. According to the slogan “if you want a well-done job, do it yourself,” the Foreign Office dispatched to Accra its best Africa expert, Steltzer, head of the Africa department, who in April had accompanied Under Secretary Lahr in his visit. The Foreign Office told the Ghanaian ambassador in Bonn that this was intended as a gesture of “special regard” vis-à-vis Ghana on the part of West Germany.<sup>988</sup> However, the decision was evidently motivated also by the relevance of Accra for the Germany policy of the Federal Republic in the Third World at that time.<sup>989</sup>

### **Ambassador Steltzer’s New Strategy**

Ambassador Steltzer’s first hassle were some negative comments in the Ghanaian press in regard to West German military advisers and arms which had reportedly reached Portuguese Angola.<sup>990</sup> The articles led to a démenti by the embassy published in the *Ghanaian Times*. Steltzer remarked that in the note released by Ghana’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the “alleged misinformation” in the newspaper was “deeply regretted” — it was the friendliest note the embassy had received by the Ghanaian government in the matter of the press attacks in over two years.<sup>991</sup> This

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<sup>987</sup> „Diplomat-Schöön. Deutschland und seine Diplomaten.“ *Stern-Magazin* Nr.24, 14.06.1964.

<sup>988</sup> PA AA B34 489, Aufzeichnung, 29.07.1964.

<sup>989</sup> Engel/Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten*, p. 216.

<sup>990</sup> “West German Military Advisers in Angola.” *Ghanaian Times*, 30 July 1964.

<sup>991</sup> PA AA B34 484, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 20.08.1964.



friendliness towards the Federal Republic was surely linked to its increased capital aid effort, and the investments various West German industrial groups had finally undertaken in Ghana. It signaled also that Bonn had at last begun to catch up with the GDR in terms of political influence and public relations, while East Germany's more aggressive behaviour began at times to cause some raised eyebrows in Accra.

In September 1964 the GDR intensified its propaganda activities in Ghana. Occasion for this renewed effort was the visit of Deputy Prime Minister Scholz, who came to inaugurate the Ghanaian government's new printing plant in Accra, which his East Germany had financed with a DM 10 million credit for the supply of the machines.<sup>992</sup> It was a significant initiative, and would remain the foremost East German technical aid project in Ghana ever. However, while the GDR delegation led by Scholz had thought they could 'cash in' the printing plant against some quick advance for their diplomatic recognition policy, the Ghanaians still showed restraint in this sense.

Scholz and his party arrived in Accra on 20 September. At the airport they were greeted by the trade minister and by the labour minister, while no one from the foreign ministry showed up — Ghana wanted to keep the political significance of the visit low. Scholz was allowed the next day to be present at the public celebrations for Nkrumah's birthday, but not to sit in the diplomats' tribune. On 23 September he paid a visit to the Ideological Institute in Winneba, where East German experts on Marxism-Leninism were working as lecturers; then he met the CPP's Secretary-General Welbeck, and finally the president. However, at the inauguration ceremony of the printing house, it was not Nkrumah who held the speech for the Ghanaian side, but the information minister.<sup>993</sup>

Most significantly, on 29 September, before leaving for Guinea, Scholz organized a press conference, in which it was declared that he and the Ghanaian president had agreed that the German question should be solved through peaceful negotiations

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<sup>992</sup> The machines originated in part from East Germany and in part from the West, PA AA B34 488, Brühl to Foreign Office, 21.07.1964.

<sup>993</sup> Ibid., Steltzer to Foreign Office, 08.10.1964.

between the two Germanies. It is possible, even likely, that Nkrumah had actually uttered these words during the meeting with Scholz. However, Ghanaians and East Germans had not been able to agree on the content of the press release after the meeting. So when Nkrumah heard of Scholz's unilateral initiative, which spurred an immediate *démarche* by the West German ambassador, he was furious.<sup>994</sup> The Ghanaian government issued a communiqué in which no mention was made of the German question, while the head of the GDR trade delegation was summoned to Flagstaff house to be rebuked.<sup>995</sup>

Due to their lack of tact, the East Germans had wasted a major chance to further their political goals in Ghana, as the propaganda effect of Scholz's visit ended up being virtually neutralized by the press conference gaffe. At the neutralists' conference in Cairo, Nkrumah showed much less interest in taking position on the German question than he had in Belgrade three years before. He did not advocate the recognition of the GDR, avoided to mention explicitly the existence of "two German states," and showed understanding for the FRG's demand for reunification, as Steltzer reported with satisfaction.<sup>996</sup>

Nonetheless, the East German aid for the printing house had somehow to be rewarded, hence as of 12 October 1964 the trade delegation of the GDR in Accra was allowed to bear the title of "Economic and Trade Mission," which sounded more diplomatic, and had also the concrete advantage for East Berlin that it could now be directed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rather than by the Ministry for External Trade.<sup>997</sup> In the meantime the inflow of GDR delegations to Ghana, and the

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<sup>994</sup> Nkrumah told Steltzer in this respect that "even if I were of the opinion that two German states exist, the [GDR] delegation wouldn't have the right to commit me — without my knowledge — in front of the Ghanaian public on this. Scholz's behaviour had been bad political style." PA AA B34 485, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 09.10.1964.

<sup>995</sup> PA AA B34 488, Aide Memoire, 02.10.1964.

<sup>996</sup> PA AA B34 485, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 09.10.1964. The head of the East German economic mission saw instead that in Cairo Nkrumah, "though in a more blurry way, postulated yet again the existence of two German states." PA AA MfAA A 15977, 30.10.1964.

<sup>997</sup> Ibid.

development of political and cultural ties continued unabated, as well as strong East German influence in the media.<sup>998</sup>

The Federal Republic still enjoyed the support of the Western-friendly Ghanaian élite. In this respect, Steltzer had good news to report: “the layer of the influential Ghanaian friends of the Eastern bloc is extremely thin while the vast majority of the intelligentsia, including numerous politicians, still show great sympathy for the Federal Republic of Germany.”<sup>999</sup> The work with the journalists was more difficult though, since they followed the directives coming straight from the president’s office and from the editors-in-chief. However, considering the fact that Nkrumah had been offended by the behaviour of Scholz in September, Steltzer considered that the time was propitious to launch a public-relations counteroffensive.<sup>1000</sup>

Determined to defy GDR hegemony at the level of propaganda and public relations, Steltzer implemented a programme of counter-propaganda, which he reckoned would have to rest entirely on the FRG’s shoulders, since support on behalf of the NATO allies would be counterproductive.<sup>1001</sup> The time of the collective démarches together with the United States and Britain was over.<sup>1002</sup>

The new strategy rested on two main pillars: a) recall of a public relations officer to the embassy, missing since Reichhold had obtained that Löwe be transferred to Ceylon; b) publication of an embassy-bulletin, with the employment of at least one qualified journalist from Germany and one Ghanaian journalist, as a reply to the bulletin of the GDR mission, which was now published in good quality in the government’s GDR-supplied printing house.<sup>1003</sup>

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<sup>998</sup> PA AA B34 488, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 06.11.1964. Articles like “G.D.R. Holds A Lot For Africa,” Daily Graphic, October 5, 1965, were frequent in Ghana’s newspaper in the first half of the 1960s. Cf. Engel/Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten*, p.193 ff.

<sup>999</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1000</sup> The editor-in-chief of the *Ghanaian Times*, the notorious Marxist Baffoe, paid a visit to Steltzer at his residence on 4 September, the day after his accreditation, and assured him his will to cooperate with the West German embassy in the future, PA AA B34 484, Steltzer to Bonn, 07.09.1964.

<sup>1001</sup> On the contrary, he reckoned that the GDR could profit from the support of a “closed phalanx of 11 Eastern bloc mission, endeavouring to bring about the recognition of the SOZ.”Ibid.

<sup>1002</sup> PA AA B34 488, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 24.09.1964.

<sup>1003</sup> PA AA B34 488, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 06.11.1964.

The idea of such a publication had been advanced by the embassy already in Lüders' days, yet rejected by the Foreign Office out of fear that this might provide further fuel in the press- and propaganda-war between Ghana and the Federal Republic.<sup>1004</sup> Now, with their best Africa expert on the spot, the Foreign Office felt confident enough and authorized the initiative. The reason for this confidence was also due to the fact that for the first time a West German ambassador seemed to have found a direct connection to the Ghanaian president. After the meeting for Steltzer's accreditation in September, of which unfortunately I couldn't find any record in the archives, the Osagyefo received the ambassador of the Federal Republic once every month until January 1965, a remarkable achievement if one considers that until then, to get in touch with the president, the last two West German representatives often had to pass through the good offices of Hanna Reitsch.

During the October audience, while Nkrumah was still angry at Scholz, Ambassador Steltzer insisted on the issue of the GDR and the German question, which the Federal Republic hoped would not be discussed at the Cairo non-aligned conference. Nkrumah stressed that in his opinion Ghana was much more aligned with West Germany than with East Germany since the former had an embassy in Accra while the latter only a trade delegation; for the rest, he did not seem willing to distance himself from his usual position, which saw in the partition of Germany a result of the Cold War. Nonetheless, Steltzer was confident he would be able in the next months to obtain a "change" in Nkrumah's attitude, thanks to his interest for the economic capability of the Federal Republic.<sup>1005</sup>

The record of the following three meetings — one took place as a working lunch with other ministers and Hanna Reitsch — shows however that Steltzer had in fact only limited success in his persuasion effort.<sup>1006</sup> Though Nkrumah seemed to like the new West German ambassador at the personal level, he was embittered and upset for the negative treatment he and his government received in the press of the Federal

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<sup>1004</sup> PA AA B34 340, Ahrens to Federal Press and Information Office, 17.01.1963.

<sup>1005</sup> PA AA B34 485, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 09.10.1964.

<sup>1006</sup> PA AA B34 484, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 11.12.1964.

Republic; moreover, Nkrumah showed scepticism in regard to Bonn's assurances that they were not supporting South Africa's racist regime, and began as of January 1965 also to attack both the United States and the Federal Republic on the issue of the Multilateral Force, whose fleet could in his view every moment "appear along the coast of Africa in order to assist the Portuguese colonialists in Angola."<sup>1007</sup> The FRG's ambassador remained with the impression that Nkrumah stood "under growing pressure of Eastern propaganda," which distorted his view of the Federal Republic.<sup>1008</sup>

In the months after Steltzer's arrival in Ghana the embassy intensified its public relations effort, and obtained finally some significant success in this respect. The news bulletin "The Bridge," in which the West Germans not only praised the merits of the Federal Republic and the cooperation with Ghana, but for the first time also attacked directly the East German regime, became one of the most eagerly read embassy bulletins in Accra.<sup>1009</sup> Even the GDR economic mission internally acknowledged that since Steltzer's arrival the West Germans worked with "more efficient means and methods."<sup>1010</sup> However, it was clear that obtaining a radical change in a country that had by then officially declared as its supreme economic policy objective to build a socialist society under a special brand of Marxism-Leninism called "Consciencism" was a tough endeavour, especially when Nkrumah himself railed against the US or Britain. Luckily for the Federal Republic, in 1965 Ghana entered a phase in which hard economic and financial considerations were paramount, or at least, as important as political issues.

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<sup>1007</sup> "What is this multilateral force? What does it mean? It means the intensification of the cold war and the threat of a nuclear hot war. It also means the proliferation of nuclear weapons; in other words, more fingers on the nuclear trigger." Kwame Nkrumah, "Bright Future For All" - Opening of the National Assembly, 12.01.1965, in Obeng, Selected Speeches, p. 406-407. In his polemic outlook Nkrumah was actually not that far from a realistic assessment. According to Costigliola, "The MLF idea grew out of concern that as the FRG developed its economic and political clout, it would overthrow the restrictions that kept it a nonnuclear power. [...] The MLF would give the Germans a finger near, though not on, the nuclear button." "US Foreign Policy from Kennedy to Johnson." In Leffler and Westad, p. 120.

<sup>1008</sup> PA AA B34 485, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 15.01.1965.

<sup>1009</sup> Cf. Kilian, Die Hallstein-Doktrin, p. 78-79. One edition of the bulletin, whose title refers to the Tefle bridge as symbolism for the bond between Ghana and the Federal Republic, can be found in PA AA B34 574.

<sup>1010</sup> PA AA MfAA A 15977, Bericht, 19.10.1964.

## **Last Years of the Regime and the Issue of Aid**

As seen from West Germany's perspective, Ghana's financial difficulties were not so much the result of the free fall which hit the price of cocoa in the mid-1960s, rather consequence of "the careless expenditure policy of the Ghanaian government to finance the [seven-year] development plan."<sup>1011</sup> There was surely some truth in this, although the West German point of view was not totally unselfish. Bonn's main concern was that Ghana aimed at containing the balance-of-payments deficit, rather than by curtailing public expenditure for investments, by cutting imports for consumption goods, which would hit the FRG's trade interests. Strong opportunities remained for West German investors therefore only in the participation in development projects, which in turn posed the problem of governmental support for investments in Ghana, either in form of guarantees or of government-to-government loans.

One group of companies that particularly profited from the credits by the Federal Government for private foreign investments was the one led by Noe Drevici, an unscrupulous businessman of Romanian origin who had recently entered the cocoa trade through his *Hamburg-Westafrikanische Handelsbank AG*, and got somehow in touch with Nkrumah's chief economic adviser Ayeh-Kumi.<sup>1012</sup> One of the businesses of the group, Frukogold, won in 1964 a Ghanaian government tender for the construction of food storage facilities in Tema and Takoradi, snatching it away from the East Germans, who failed to advance credible alternatives — an episode which the West German embassy saluted as a significant victory.<sup>1013</sup> Drevici accepted also to build a chocolate factory in Tema — "Golden Tree" — which would have to be

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<sup>1011</sup> PA AA B34 572, Schaad to Foreign Office, 22.01.1965.

<sup>1012</sup> "Kampf mit braunen Bohnen." *Der Spiegel*, Nr.10/1965. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46169664.html> 16.02.2016].

<sup>1013</sup> PA AA B34 487, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 02.09.1964.

sold off to the Ghanaian government after five years, as well as three other food processing factories.<sup>1014</sup>

The British Foreign Office, alarmed by John Cadbury from the homonymous chocolate manufacturing company, watched closely and with suspicion the activities of the tentacular Drevici group in Ghana.<sup>1015</sup> Though the rapid ascent of Drevici raised concerns in Hamburg's business circles as well,<sup>1016</sup> for the Federal Republic it was a relatively cheap way to keep economic exchange going in times of financial difficulties for Ghana, and at the same time, a good means to influence the volatile Ghanaian regime.<sup>1017</sup> This was all the more significant since on the financial aid side the Federal Government had not much margin to manoeuvre. It is true that Bonn had given assurance that further requests for up to DM 10 million of capital aid would be examined; Ghana however presented demands for direct financial help amounting to £10 million, i.e. ten times that sum, plus the restructuring of a number of medium-term debts for DM 390 million, a yearly credit of DM 330 million over seven years, and a revolving credit of DM 550 million.<sup>1018</sup> The Federal Republic accepted to negotiate on the first two points, although the credit would have to come from private sources, provided that Ghana entered a financial stabilization programme of the World Bank or the IMF.<sup>1019</sup>

At first, in the matter of financial aid Bonn aligned with Britain and the United States, which both insisted that Ghana should be helped only in the context of a multilateral, IMF-led initiative. The ambassador in Accra, noting a recrudescence of

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<sup>1014</sup> TNA, DO 221/8, H.M. Consulate-General, 21.02.1965. Drevici even accepted to host the Ghanaian consulate in Hamburg in one of his villas on the Alster, "Kampf mit braunen Bohnen." *Der Spiegel*, Nr.10/1965. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46169664.html> [16.02.2016].

<sup>1015</sup> The frame agreement signed between Ghana and just one of the group's companies, Savyion, led by Drevici's son from Lausanne in Switzerland, amounted to £40 million worth in projects, TNA, DO 221/8, Gross to Davies, 22.05.1965.

<sup>1016</sup> According to rumours gathered by the British consulate, banks in Hamburg were "afraid that if Drevici continues on his present course the whole of Ghana's foreign trade will be channelled through him, the Hamburg-Afrika Bank and the Ghana Commercial Bank." TNA, DO 221/8, Sinclair to Croxen, 24.02.1965.

<sup>1017</sup> Drevici's luck in Ghana survived the downfall of the Nkrumah regime until 1970, when the government decided that time was ripe to part with Drevici, and sent police to seize all of the group's enterprises in Ghana. The businessman and his wife had already fled the country though. "Haie gewarnt." *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 20/1970. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-44943749.html> [16.02.2016].

<sup>1018</sup> PA AA B34 573, n.d.

<sup>1019</sup> *Ibid.*, Amsberg, 07.01.1965.

press attacks against the FRG as well as stronger Soviet influence in Ghana, recommended — in the ‘style’ of his predecessor Lüders — to grant only DM 2 million, “to show our good will, without freeing the regime from its financial troubles.”<sup>1020</sup> However, as the defence of the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* — the principle according to which the FRG was the only legitimate representative of the German people — suffered setbacks in Tanzania and Egypt in 1965, Steltzer reckoned that they ought to be conciliatory towards Ghana’s requests:

If we persist in our present standpoint, we must fear that out of disappointment for the failed credit negotiations, and considering the strong Soviet influence on Nkrumah, we could witness in Ghana a similar development in the relations with the Federal Republic of Germany as presently is the case with the UAR. However, if we help the Ghanaian government now in its acute distress, there is not only a good chance to avoid that the “Cairo spark” ignites Ghana as well, but also the possibility to permanently redress our relationship with this important African country.<sup>1021</sup>

After one month, though Nkrumah pleased Bonn by refusing an invitation to visit East Germany and kept a low profile on the FRG’s troubles elsewhere in Africa, little had happened on the financial side, and for the technical aid part too, where the FRG was contributing to the setting up of Ghana’s television.<sup>1022</sup> Steltzer worriedly told the Foreign Office that the East had scaled up the effort to obtain an upgrading of the GDR’s status in Ghana, and that East Germany’s proposal of a £25 million credit for the UAR had found great echo in the Ghanaian press.<sup>1023</sup> The ambassadors’ concern was that failing any significant financial assistance from the West and the Federal Republic, Nkrumah might succumb to a financial proposition from East Berlin, which would ‘cost’ him at least a consulate-general for the GDR, if not full diplomatic relations. Ghana’s honorary consul in Hamburg, Folke Breuning, gained the same impression after a visit to Ghana.<sup>1024</sup> He told Under Secretary Lahr that Nkrumah presently stood under pressure from his left-wing advisers to accept a “massive

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<sup>1020</sup> PA AA B34 487, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 27.11.1964.

<sup>1021</sup> PA AA B34 573, Aufzeichnung, Steltzer, 03.02.1965. Cf. Grey, *Germany’s Cold War*, p. 162 ff; Engel/Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten*, p. 162 ff.

<sup>1022</sup> The project involved the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), close to the Social Democrats in West Germany, PA AA B34 574. S. a. PRAAD RG 17/1/371.

<sup>1023</sup> PA AA B34 573, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 03.03.1965.

<sup>1024</sup> PA AA B34 573, Vermerk, Harder, 03.06.1965.



economic aid proposal” by the GDR, which was naturally tied to “political concessions for the East Zone.”<sup>1025</sup> Lahr confirmed that in his opinion too, given Ghana’s present political isolation and financial distress, Nkrumah might be “in the predisposition of doing something unreasonable.”<sup>1026</sup>

To avoid any such incident, the Federal Minister of Housing, Paul Lücke, was sent over to Ghana in June. Nkrumah had invited a high personality from the Federal Republic to take part in a second ceremony in connection with the Tefle project, for the positioning of the first beam of the bridge.<sup>1027</sup> Lücke’s visit, the first of a West German minister to Ghana (excluding the delegation to the independence celebrations in 1957) was another public relations success for Bonn, even greater perhaps than Lahr’s trip of 1964. As the press highlighted, the minister and his party were given a first-class treatment, including the special honour of a presidential luncheon.<sup>1028</sup>

Lücke had the chance for extended conversations with Nkrumah on three separate occasions in the course of the visit, for over three hours of talks in all. He appreciated Ghana’s “understanding position on the Near East conflict” (i.e., the FRG’s dispute with Nasser on the relations with Israel), to which Nkrumah, who had always been quite Israel-friendly, responded that he didn’t understand why the Federal Republic should be denied entertaining relations with Israel, as did “nearly all the world.”<sup>1029</sup> The West German minister also expressed his government’s gratitude for the initiative of Ghana’s delegate to the United Nations, Quaison-Sackey, who acting as president of the General Assembly had spoken out in favour of German reunification on the basis of “self-determination” — an initiative that had cost Ghana a reprimand by the Soviet Union.<sup>1030</sup>

Nkrumah, for his part, disclosed Lücke his grave worries about Ghana’s financial situation caused by the tumbling market value of cocoa, which had upset the

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<sup>1025</sup> Paul Scholz had in fact offered Ghana VM 85 million, or about 7 million Ghana Cedi (the new currency introduced in 1965). Nkrumah asked to increase it to 10 million Ghana Cedi. PA AA MfAA A 15977, 23.03.1965.

<sup>1026</sup> PA AA B34 573, Vermerk, Harder, 03.06.1965.

<sup>1027</sup> PA AA B34 573, Aufzeichnung, Pauls, 19.05.1965.

<sup>1028</sup> PA AA B34 573, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 11.06.1965.

<sup>1029</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1030</sup> PA AA B34 485, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 07.12.1964.

government's financial planning, and expressed hope that the Federal Republic would help Ghana with the restructuring of its debt.<sup>1031</sup> However, he also seemed enthusiastic at the idea of visiting the Federal Republic, when Lücke reiterated the invitation that had first been expressed in 1959, and again in 1964 by Under Secretary Lahr. It was finally agreed that Nkrumah would pay an official visit to the Federal Republic in spring 1966.<sup>1032</sup>

It is clear that this new entente between Bonn and Accra was in the first place the result of Ghana's financial difficulties, which offered the Federal Republic greater possibilities of influence, especially in view of US wariness to carry on further investments beyond the Volta scheme.<sup>1033</sup> As the head of the GDR economic mission had to admit in his yearly report to the MfAA:

Overall, the West German influence in Ghana has grown, especially on the economic side. The main West German target, preventing the establishment of diplomatic relations with the GDR, was reached. Through the consolidation of its economic position, West Germany has created a basis by which it can exert corresponding economic pressure in case of controversies. Ghana's leadership will have to take these factors into consideration in case it wants to make political decisions.<sup>1034</sup>

To meet the challenge of the Federal Republic and avoid falling back in the competition, the GDR intensified its economic cooperation with Ghana as well. In 1964, the volume of trade between East Germany and Ghana had receded, and the agreement on technical-scientific cooperation still lacked any concrete implementation. Noting the pressure coming from Accra in this sense, in July 1965, East Germany's Vice Minister for External and Inner-German Trade finally signed an agreement with the Ghanaian government for a \$24 million credit, and also for the delivery of complete industrial plants. Ghana thus became the second-highest receiver of East German aid in Africa after the UAR.<sup>1035</sup>

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<sup>1031</sup> PA AA B34 573, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 11.06.1965.

<sup>1032</sup> PA AA B34 573, Aufzeichnung, 16.08.1965. The Foreign Office considered that with the visit Nkrumah aimed at furthering his pleas for financial help as well as at boosting his international prestige *ibid.*, Posadowski-Wehner, 28.06.1965.

<sup>1033</sup> Steltzer noted that "the Ghanaian press shows lately much more understanding for German problems than before. This attitude is without a doubt related to Ghanaian want for credit." PA AA B34 573, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 08.04.1965.

<sup>1034</sup> PA AA MfAA A 15977, Analyse, 24.11.1966.

<sup>1035</sup> Engel/Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten*, p. 206-207.

In mid-1965 it looked therefore like Nkrumah's flirting with both German states had finally begun yielding concrete results. Considering Ghana's serious situation especially on the financial side, and also its political isolation, this represented a badly-needed injection of optimism. For the West, it meant though a setback in terms of strategic coordination. While Washington and London did their best to terminate the Ghana experiment as quickly as possible and bring about a regime change, the FRG intensified its relations to avoid advances of the East German rivals.

In May, Nkrumah had blasted "monopoly capitalism" and imperialism for causing the fall of cocoa price; however, failing any concrete support on the part of the Soviet Union, the negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank had to continue.<sup>1036</sup> If Ghana agreed to enter a restructuring programme, it would be able to withdraw up to \$52 million from its quota, the IMF assured.<sup>1037</sup> This would have meant though putting aside a number of investment projects for the following years and closing down at least some of the worst loss-makers in the state sector, as the World Bank mission on visit in Ghana had made clear in September.<sup>1038</sup>

In connection with these financial negotiations — Bonn linked further bilateral help, e.g. for an electrification project, to the outcome of the international proceedings<sup>1039</sup> — the Federal Republic reiterated that its aid, even in the context of a multilateral initiative, was connected to "corresponding well-behaviour" on the part of Ghana: "In case of unqualified attacks against the Federal Republic of Germany by the Ghanaian press no one can expect from us that we provide aid for Ghana," the West German ambassador stressed.<sup>1040</sup> Few weeks after the World Bank delegation left Accra, the Federal Republic's political relations with Ghana were actually put to the most severe test since the opening of the Ghanaian trade mission in East Berlin in 1963.

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<sup>1036</sup> While the issue of the financing for the Bui-dam project, object of negotiations with the Soviet Union for years, still stood out, a Ghanaian delegation visited Moscow in December 1965 for proceedings on trade issues, which carried little results though, PA AA B34 573, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 27.12.1965.

<sup>1037</sup> PA AA B34 573, Schaad to Foreign Office, 21.05.1965.

<sup>1038</sup> PA AA B34 573, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 06.09.1965.

<sup>1039</sup> PA AA B34 574, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 03.12.1965.

<sup>1040</sup> PA AA B34 573, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 06.09.1965.

## The Herold Case - Cui Prodest?

On 23 October 1965, Lutz Herold, a Nigerian-based West German correspondent who worked for the magazine *Der Spiegel* as well as the Carl-Duisberg Society, a state-funded foundation for professional development and vocational training, was arrested by Ghanaian police shortly after his entering the country from the Togolese border. Alerted by the intelligence services, they found in his wallet a letter, written by a member of the exile opposition in Lagos, addressed to another dissident in Ghana. In the missive, the addressee was asked to fill out a questionnaire about the possibilities that an uprising against the government could take place in Ghana.<sup>1041</sup>

After two days of interrogation, the journalist admitted that he had got in touch with “Ghanaian refugees” in Nigeria, and eventually even with the leaders of the exile opposition Kow Richardson and Kofi Busia. The latter asked him whether he had “valuable connection to organizations in West Germany or European Labour Unions [...] for the purpose of financial help.”<sup>1042</sup> The journalist agreed to make some enquiries among industrialists and trade unions in the Federal Republic. When he was about to leave for Accra to cover the summit of the OAU in Accra, Richardson gave him a letter as well as a sum of £15 for an acquaintance of him, a reporter from Ghana’s *Daily Graphic*. Herold declared the Special Branch, which handled the political cases, that he had learned of the content of the letter only when he arrived in Ghana; he had kept it only as “an exhibit,” to prove Richardson “that he had deceived me [...]”<sup>1043</sup> Unsurprisingly, Herold remained in detention, and was incriminated for “misprision of treason” (i.e. failure to report a plot), conspiracy, and even illegal importation of currency.<sup>1044</sup>

The West German embassy, alerted after the journalist had given his statement to the police, was appalled at the carelessness of the reporter, and predicted quite

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<sup>1041</sup> PA AA B34 600, 21.10.1965.

<sup>1042</sup> PA AA B34 600, Statement, 25.10.1965.

<sup>1043</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1044</sup> TNA, DO 195/237, Seaward to Shea, 17.11.1965. For Herold’s own account of the events leading to his arrest and incrimination, s. “PACKEN SIE ENDLICH AUS, MR. HEROLD.” *Der Spiegel* 15/1966. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46266324.html> [16.02.2016].

correctly that it would be hard to convince the Ghanaian authorities that he had acted in good faith.<sup>1045</sup> Ambassador Steltzer was allowed to see Herold in custody the day after the arrest was made public, and found him in good shape. He tried to convince Foreign Minister Quaison-Sackey that Herold was just “a journalist seeking after interesting information, but without the intention of threatening the security of the Ghanaian state,” and suggested that Ghana should expel him right away. However, the minister reported that the president was “highly upset” about the matter, and that it would be difficult to avoid a trial.<sup>1046</sup>

Nkrumah refused for some time to receive the West German ambassador. Hanna Reitsch went to see Nkrumah the evening the newspapers reported the episode. She excluded the journalist might have been seriously implicated in some conspiracy, but this time she failed to persuade the president:

‘I’m coming directly from our ambassador. Nothing of all that is true! It is nothing but deliberate, hostile propaganda against us. It appears this journalist, who has brought all this onto us, is just a harmless messenger. You must hear the ambassador himself on the issue!’ Osagyefo gave me a calm but sad look and said: ‘Either the ambassador willingly deceived you, or he has been lied to by the journalist. Do you want to see the documents? I’ve got everything at hand and it’s being translated to me.’<sup>1047</sup>

The most embarrassing aspect of the matter was that Herold worked for an agency funded by the Federal Government, which made him look in a more official position than he actually was.<sup>1048</sup>

After almost one month of press attacks against the Federal Republic, and without getting the chance to meet the president, Steltzer resigned himself to report a “serious tarnishing of German-Ghanaian relations.”<sup>1049</sup> He told the Foreign Office that, though there had not been direct attacks against the Federal Government so far, *Spark* and

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<sup>1045</sup> PA AA B34 600, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 29.10.1965.

<sup>1046</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1047</sup> Reitsch, *Ich flog in Afrika*, p. 188.

<sup>1048</sup> According to information gathered by the British Foreign Office, the journalist had encouraged this tendency: “It appears that Herold has made himself rather unpopular with Nigerian journalists by his sharp practices. He is distrusted because of the amount of money he has at his disposal and it is generally believed that he is not an ordinary journalist. He has been involved in bringing pressure on the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education to recognise German qualifications and has tried generally to increase German influence in the educational field. While doing this he has represented himself to the Ministry as a member of the German Embassy.” TNA, DO 195/237, Seaward to Shea, 17.11.1965.

<sup>1049</sup> PA AA B34 600, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 22.11.1965.

*Evening News* had begun a GDR-inspired campaign, tolerated or even supported by the president himself, which depicted Herold as the exemplary representative of West Germany, an imperialist, post-fascist, neocolonialist nation, “allied with Vorwoerd, Ian Smith and Salazar.”<sup>1050</sup> “For all who fear the bogeyman of neo-colonialism,” Steltzer said, “Herold’s behaviour is taken as proof that the Federal Republic, like the other capitalist countries, is promoting subversion in Africa in order to win back the colonial powers’ predominant position.”<sup>1051</sup>

Considering that in those same days Nkrumah presented his latest work *Neocolonialism*, arousing the ire of the US government, it seemed that the autumn of 1965 had brought a new lurch to the left in Ghana after a period of relative moderation. Steltzer in any case suggested adopting a strong counter-reaction: “We did everything we could to improve the climate. We can only hope to make some progress if we express unmistakably that we don’t need these relations [between the Federal Republic and Ghana] at all cost.”<sup>1052</sup> Steltzer thus protested with the foreign ministry and threatened to be recalled to Bonn, while already approved development projects were put on hold.<sup>1053</sup>

In the face of this harsh reaction Nkrumah finally yielded, summoned the West German ambassador and told him that the investigations had not produced reasons to suspect of an implication of the Federal Government, and that he had instructed the editors-in-chief of the papers to take this into consideration. Steltzer welcomed Nkrumah’s statement, although he stressed that “the damage resulting from the press campaign could not be repaired so easily.”<sup>1054</sup>

After four weeks of ‘ice age,’ in the course of which even the caption “made in West Germany” screened at the beginning of FRG educational films on Ghanaian television had been omitted, the worst seemed to be over. Nevertheless, the fact that on 30 November 1965 Herold was sentenced to forty years of jail with hard labour,

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<sup>1050</sup> The Ghanaian papers quoted also extensively from the GDR’s newly-published “Brown Book” on the Nazi past of the Federal Republic, TNA, DO 195/237, Accra to CRO, 24.11.1965.

<sup>1051</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1052</sup> Ibid. The proposed catalogue of “escalating measures” in attachment could not be found in the file.

<sup>1053</sup> TNA, DO 195/237, Accra to CRO, 22.11.1965.

<sup>1054</sup> PA AA B34 600, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 29.11.1965.

showed that Nkrumah had decided to keep the imprudent journalist as a bargaining chip for future negotiations — in fact, he could now trade a pardon for Herold with some further concessions, or at least show his clemency to the West German public before the planned visit to the Federal Republic.<sup>1055</sup>

To be sure, the Herold case was political. There is strong reason to believe that it was orchestrated by elements hostile either to Nkrumah or to West Germany, or in any case critical of the rapprochement between Ghana and the Federal Republic. Two were the environments which had interest in sabotaging the détente between Bonn and Accra. On the one hand, the Ghanaian left and the Eastern bloc, especially the GDR; they certainly tried to make the most out of the case after it erupted.<sup>1056</sup> However, they could hardly have influenced known anti-communists like Richardson and Busia, who were closely watched by the Ghanaian Special Branch<sup>1057</sup>

On the other hand there were all those who opposed Nkrumah, in Ghana and abroad, and feared perhaps that his new entente with West Germany might provide fresh life-blood to the regime, which was evidently in deep crisis from the financial and political point of view. The news that a visit by Nkrumah in the Federal Republic had been planned for 1966 was not well received especially in the Francophone states such as the Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>1058</sup> It was surely in their political interest to sabotage every chance Nkrumah had left to raise his political profile and obtain fresh economic support.<sup>1059</sup>

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<sup>1055</sup> Nkrumah apparently expressed Reitsch his intention to pardon Herold after one year of detention, PA AA B34 574, Vermerk, Wever, 20.03.1967.

<sup>1056</sup> This was also the opinion of members of the FES who were engaged in the Ghana television project, PA AA B34 600, Aufzeichnung, Röhreke, 12.01.1966.

<sup>1057</sup> Steltzer told the British High Commissioner that in the weeks after Herold's arrest, "the authorities had sent an agent provocateur to see his press people shortly after the case, pretending to be an emissary of Busia. He had discovered that the man was a Nigerian, who had been briefed by [Sam] Ikoku, the Action Group renegade who now lectures at Winneba and writes for 'Spark.'" TNA, DO 195/237, Accra to CRO, 14.12.1965.

<sup>1058</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1059</sup> Cf. TNA, DO 195/237, Seaward to Shea, 03.12.1965.

## West Germany and Nkrumah - The Epilogue

Despite the setback of the Herold case, it must be acknowledged that the Federal Republic's new strategy in Ghana, i.e. Steltzer's approach, which combined a direct personal relationship with Nkrumah, more aggressive public relations, and intensified economic relations, had succeeded to some extent in fending off East Germany's influence and the risk of an upgrading of the GDR economic mission in Accra, as well as in keeping Ghana tied to the West. However, this turn had come late. The Ghanaian experiment had lost its value for the West. By 1965 at latest higher political circles, in Washington and London, had decided that Nkrumah, with all his whims and political extravagance and in desperate need of financial support, was a liability for Western geo-strategic interests in sub-Saharan Africa; thus, he had to go.

There are no signs in the archives that the West German ambassador belonged to the inner circle of those who the anti-Nkrumah plotters kept informed about their moves.<sup>1060</sup> Considering Lüders' bad experience with this kind of machinations, Steltzer as it seems did everything he could to steer clear of all plotters, although he must have been aware like everybody else in Accra that a coup d'état was expected to take place.<sup>1061</sup> The Herold case surely took away Steltzer's last illusions about Nkrumah's political far-sightedness. Commenting on Ghana's political stand over the course of 1965, he criticized Nkrumah's "constant inclination to put ideology to the forefront against points of view of economic rationality," and argued that through his policy of "split personality" he had isolated Ghana not only in the African context, but also on the wider political stage, as both the West and the East were now wary of Ghana's initiatives.<sup>1062</sup>

When finally in 1966 news broke that in the absence of the Osagyefo the military had taken over the reins of government, a huge sigh of relief went through the embassy of the Federal Republic, and surely through the Foreign Office in Bonn too.

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<sup>1060</sup> Not all files related to the period of 1965-1966 had been released at the time of my research in 2014, NB.

<sup>1061</sup> Nkrumah told the West Germans that he was "concerned about the possibility that his absence so soon after the series of military coups in other African states might encourage his opponents to try something while he was away." TNA, DO 195/237, Taylor to Brown, 16.02.1966.

<sup>1062</sup> PA AA B34 641, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 10.01.1966.



Steltzer's account of the political revolution in Ghana was enthusiastic and celebrative. In his first report to the Foreign Office he defined the coup, in perfect Cold-War manner, "the downfall of one of the foremost and most dangerous strongholds of the Eastern bloc in Africa. [...] Communism and radicalism have hereby suffered a crushing defeat on African soil; the superiority of liberal democratic thought against Eastern-style totalitarianism has been proved once again."<sup>1063</sup>

The West German ambassador saluted the coup as a victory of liberty: "one of the most significant and technically developed countries in Black Africa has freed itself from Nkrumah's tyranny and endorses under its new order our ideals of freedom and democracy."<sup>1064</sup> The circumstance that the new military regime had decided to ban all political parties, arrested several journalists considered close to the old regime, and allowed the burning of thousands of books from the Winneba Ideological Institute ("a great bonfire") did not arouse the slightest perplexity in Steltzer's words. That the coup had cost thirty-two lives, soldiers and civilians, was not even mentioned.<sup>1065</sup>

For Bonn, what counted was that the spectre of an East German consulate-general or embassy in Accra was banned for good. The new regime, called National Liberation Council (NLC), hastened to tell Bonn that they viewed in the Federal Republic the only representative of Germany, and one of their main economic and political partners outside of Africa. As proof of their good will they granted the quick release of Herold, as well as the extradition, pending since 1961, of a German concentration-camp physician wanted in the Federal Republic for war crimes.<sup>1066</sup> Of course, the East German trade mission in Accra and the Ghanaian delegation in East Berlin were rapidly closed down, although single GDR officials were allowed to stay

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<sup>1063</sup> PA AA B34 641, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 07.03.1966.

<sup>1064</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1065</sup> Cf. TNA, DO 153/49, Miles to Bottomley, 28.03.1966.

<sup>1066</sup> PA AA B34 642, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 07.03.1962. The West German authorities demanded the extradition of Dr. Horst Schumann since 1961, s. Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, p.79. The extradition was finally authorized by Ghana's Supreme Court in November 1966, see "Unbekannter Mann." *Der Spiegel* 39/1970. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-44904888.html> [16.02.2016].

in the country to cater for trade affairs.<sup>1067</sup> The West Germans, on their part, as first foreign state to do so, expressed a sort of “unofficial recognition” of the new regime, and quickly activated financial help and other aid for Ghana.<sup>1068</sup>

In sum, it is possible to say that over the Nkrumah era, which overlapped with crucial years of the Cold War and the German question, the Federal Republic of Germany played a significant role for Ghana’s international relations. The most important one was that of trade partner. Buying up constantly more cocoa than the entire Eastern bloc combined, the FRG basically held the Ghanaian experiment West-oriented, simply by consuming thousands of tons of Ghanaian cocoa year after year. Its political influence took some time to unfold though.

Until 1959, it was Britain’s both real and perceived hostility to the German presence in its former model colony to keep Bonn wary of too much visible engagement. When in the early 1960s the West finally coordinated its strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, the FRG’s role, supposed to develop mainly through the granting of capital aid, was crippled by Ghana’s exposure on the German question, and the rising tide of East German propaganda and political activity, which put Bonn on the defensive. Moreover, the Togo policy of the Federal Republic interfered with the relations with the touchy Ghanaian regime.

Ghana was a tough nut to crack for the West German Foreign Office. Three out of four ambassadors over the Nkrumah era were the object of negative press comments, either from Ghanaian or from West German sources, or from both. All had to pursue numerous *démarches*, especially against the GDR-inspired agitation in Ghana’s newspapers. When in 1964 the Federal Republic finally had with Steltzer its best Africa-expert in place, along with Hanna Reitsch as confidant of the president, and significant development projects through which to exert influence, the West as a

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<sup>1067</sup> In November 1966, the West German embassy succeeded in having the local correspondent of the East German information service ADN expelled, since GDR advertisement kept being published in Ghanaian newspapers, PA AA B34 642, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 01.12.1966. Later the Foreign Office also tried to hinder East Germany’s participation in the Accra International Fair, but the NLC this time resisted West German pressure, stressing that Ghana needed to avoid the impression of being now totally pro-Western, *ibid.*, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 19.12.1966.

<sup>1068</sup> PA AA B34 643, Steltzer to Foreign Office, 07.10.1966.

whole had lost interest in the Ghanaian experiment. Especially Britain and the United States worked covertly to isolate and undermine Nkrumah's regime, making the rapprochement between Bonn and Accra useless, perhaps even unwanted.

## Conclusions

In this dissertation, I argue that the developmental years of Ghana, the first state to become independent from colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa, were marked by an intense effort by the United Kingdom to showcase the country as a successful model of democracy export, which they called the “Ghana Experiment.” I also argue that major Western powers like the United States and West Germany participated in the effort to keep Ghana aligned with the West as a role model for the rest of Black Africa. As this effort did not yield the expected results and Ghana’s President Kwame Nkrumah embarked on an adventurous, anti-imperialistic pan-African policy, Britain and the United States concerted a common strategy which accelerated Nkrumah’s downfall and brought Ghana back in the Western sphere of influence.

In the course of this work, we have followed in particular the evolution (or if you prefer, the involution) of the relations at the political, diplomatic and economic level between Ghana and three specific countries of the so-called West, namely Great Britain, the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany, over the nine years in which the former Gold Coast was ruled as an independent state by Kwame Nkrumah.

Chapter I has been dedicated to the relationship between Great Britain and its former “model colony”; this relationship of course had a lasting influence on how Ghana constructed its own view of things in the first years after independence. We have seen how the British and the Ghanaians approached the birth of sub-Saharan Africa’s first independent nation with very different expectations. While the former expected Ghana, their “experiment” of state-building, to be the pride of the Commonwealth of Nations, behave democratically, and keep providing a steady inflow of hard currency thanks to the cocoa trade, the latter, i.e. Nkrumah and the CPP, dreamt of a “jet-propelled” development which would project the country directly into the age of industrialization and welfare state, and expected help from the British to achieve this. Already in 1957 there were signals that both expectations would be disappointed, yet only in 1960 the discrepancies were revealed.

Other authors have already recognized the value of the Gold Coast for Britain as a “key test” for African decolonization and exporting democracy south of the Sahara, especially as a counterweight to segregationist South Africa; it is often reminded in this context that against the unmistakable signs of authoritarianism of the CPP regime “British officials chose to read these signs in a tolerant manner,” perhaps as a continuation of the tradition of colonial policies.<sup>1069</sup> On the other hand, as we have seen, the British press, taken as a whole, never showed any particular lenience towards the Ghana government and its strong-hand tactics, which then raised charges of arrogance and paternalism as a reaction on the part of the Ghanaians. The issue soon escalated into a harsh press war.

In order to keep the “Ghana experiment” on the right track and avoid an embarrassing drift towards left-wing populism, Ghana experts such as the High Commissioners in Accra and Sir Robert Jackson solicited, as of 1957, an increased effort in terms of development aid and investments, so as to demonstrate the good will of the West. Influence in the postcolonial states was costly though, even for former colonial powers. Britain, however, did not have that kind of money at the time, having to deal with its own balance of payments difficulties; in fact, it hoped Ghana would keep contributing badly-needed dollars for the stabilization of the sterling area. So the first years of the postcolonial relations between the British and Ghana were marked by reciprocal disappointment: the former were embarrassed when they found out that their “model student” was not behaving as they expected it would; the latter was embittered as it saw not only that no capital aid would be forthcoming for the government’s grandiose development plans, but also that over the years, when it had kept all its savings in Crown bonds, Ghana had made a loss of £20 million!

The British tried to keep influencing the Ghana government through less expensive means than capital aid, such as: 1) assistance for the build-up of Ghana’s armed forces, especially with the British Joint Services Training Team, which proved valid

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<sup>1069</sup> Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, p. 433.

as a means of influence as long as Nkrumah himself trusted his own military; 2) the Commonwealth bond, cherished very much by Nkrumah as a stage for international cooperation, but which did not survive in the end the rupture over the Rhodesian issue.

To overcome the difficulties in dealing with the impatient government in Accra, Britain thus relied especially on the help by the United States. As has been argued, in London's plans "the new African informal empire would be increasingly Anglo-American rather than British."<sup>1070</sup> Involving Washington in Africa in those years meant talking in Cold War terms. The Eisenhower administration appreciated the rising importance of Africa and the need for decolonization, provided though that one always kept in mind America's first foreign policy priority: avoiding any possible growth of Soviet influence. While the British sided with Ghana and resisted US pressure in regard to the invitation of communist China to the independence celebrations, later on it became difficult for London to defend Ghana's non-alignment, since Ghana insisted that this implied having friendly relations with the East too.

The extent of Ghana's "lurch to the left" came as a surprise to Britain, although it was not really unexpected. High Commissioner Snelling at first criticized the regime's drift towards left-wing authoritarianism and populism; later on he realized that much of the criticism coming from British sources was vitiated by a patronizing attitude, and tried to convince the Foreign Office that the United Kingdom ought to meet Ghana with less arrogance and more availability to provide material help for development, if it didn't want to lose the battle for influence against the East. Snelling's self-critical suggestions raised mixed remarks in Whitehall; in any case, the British government was not ready to finance any major project in Ghana, except for a minor participation in the Volta scheme, and there was little hope to influence the press too.

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<sup>1070</sup> Louis and Robinson, "Empire preserv'd," in Duara, *Decolonization*, p. 158-159.

In 1961 Macmillan decided to play the card of highest symbolic value: the Queen. Her Majesty's visit in Accra was a public relations success for Britain as it kept Ghana West-friendly for some time, but failed to deter Nkrumah from seeking closer relations with the Soviet Union and the rest of the communist countries.

In the first half of 1962, the new High Commissioner De Freitas approached his assignment with great confidence that Ghana's drift to the left could still be halted. However, after the bomb attack in the summer, which left Nkrumah wounded and wary, the Ghanaian pendulum began swinging periodically from one direction to the other, defying the analysts' ability to read into the Osagyefo's mind. In any case, it became clear that Nkrumah was taking on himself more and more power, and personally supervised the anti-Western campaigns started in Ghana's printed media as a means to counterbalance the Ghana's still preponderant economic ties to the capitalist countries, especially after the subscription of the agreement on the Volta Project.

As of late 1963 a certain "Ghana fatigue" was noticeable in Britain; the appointment of a relatively inexperienced diplomat as De Freitas' successor at the High Commission can be seen as a sign of this declining importance of Ghana for Britain's policy towards Africa. With the end of Macmillan's government, as first Alec Douglas-Home and then Harold Wilson took over in Downing Street, a consensus was established that in fact the "Ghana experiment," i.e. the casting of Ghana into the role of liberal democratic model for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, had failed, and that the CPP's socialist regime needed to be replaced by a more moderate one. From 1964 onwards the British therefore collaborated actively in the political isolation of Ghana at the African level, and steered clear of any financial help that could possibly contribute to stabilize Nkrumah's government. After Ghana decided in 1965 to break diplomatic relations with Britain to protest against Britain's leniency towards Rhodesia's UDI, the armed forces finally delivered the United Kingdom of Africa's former star pupil, who had become a significant source of embarrassment.

To be sure, no analysis of the relations between sub-Saharan Africa and the West in the decolonization period can do without a look on the Congo Crisis (1960-1965). It has been traditionally seen, with good reason, as a watershed for the relationship between Ghana and the Western world as well. In the course of the Crisis, Nkrumah passed from being a useful local ally in the attempt to influence in a moderate direction Congo's Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, to one of the main culprits of the latter's increasing drift to the left. While both Ghana, Britain and the United States agreed that the United Nations' role was essential to resolve the intricate problem of the Congo, as the role of foreign interests in Lumumba's fall and murder became evident, Nkrumah became obsessed by neocolonialism, and met the West with a duplicity which in his view was a justified response to Western hypocrisy.

The relationship between the United States of America and Ghana [Chapter II] was marked by significant expectations on both sides as well. While the former hoped to find in Ghana the best example of a successful black democracy, whose friendship could be cultivated for internal electoral purposes as well as a counterweight to radical, left-leaning nationalism, the latter expected America to provide the development capital which Britain was not willing or able to invest. However, the Eisenhower administration didn't exactly have a warm relationship with Africa's nationalists — more than often they considered the push for independence from colonialism, of which Ghana was a vehement supporter, premature for the 'backward' Africans.

Eisenhower referred Ghana's requests for funding for the Volta scheme to transnational corporations of the aluminium sector, which in turn demanded wide coverage by the Federal Government against "political risks" for their investments in Ghana. When finally the negotiations seemed to have come to conclusion, Ghana's lurch to the left, and the diverging assessments of the Congo Crisis, put a wedge between Washington and Accra. Nkrumah's speech at the UN General Assembly in September 1960, and the unseemly reaction by Secretary of State Herter, marked the



preliminary peak of an estrangement which would reach worrying levels in the successive five-and-a-half years.

The Volta River Project, an ancient idea from colonial times pursued by British entrepreneurs and engineers since the 1920s, played a major role in US-Ghanaian relations. Initially, it was supposed to provide the British Empire, and then the Commonwealth, with a cheap and abundant source of bauxite, the ore from which aluminium is extracted. However, while in the 1950s Nkrumah's autonomous government became interested in the scheme as a way to electrify and develop the country, the cost estimates exploded, and the British lost interest. Ghana tried therefore to bring the Americans on board, which implied however tough political negotiations with the Eisenhower government first and with Kennedy later, as well as hard bargaining with the aluminium corporations.

In the end, the Volta Project was completed, but Ghana had to renounce the use of its own bauxite, and accept a giveaway price for the electricity the Kaiser corporation would use to fuel its aluminium smelter. Paradoxically, the name of the fiercest denouncer of neocolonialism will always be associated with a development scheme which from the outset was criticized as being neocolonial in character. While it symbolizes the investment Kennedy made on Ghana as the epicentre of African nationalism, it seems as though the multinationals were the real winners of the game.

To be sure, the relationship between Nkrumah and Kennedy was complex. On the one hand, J.F.K. was the American president who took more personal interest in Africa ever. The "New Frontier" look on Africa of his administration was surely appreciated by many south of the Sahara, and brought America lasting kudos. Kennedy's strategy for Africa, of which Ghana was the cornerstone, intended to win over those charismatic leaders whom the Eisenhower administration had neglected. However, Kennedy's attitude towards Ghana and Africa in general was not without contradictions. The ups and downs which marked US-Ghanaian relations between 1961 and 1963, in other words, cannot be attributed thus solely to Nkrumah's apparently moody and inconsistent behaviour, but must be seen as the result of

Kennedy's fundamentally unresolved ambiguities as well. Nevertheless, there was enough pragmatism and reciprocal esteem on both sides to overcome the differences that periodically rocked the relations between the two governments.

After the death of Kennedy, however, as Nkrumah was the target of another assassination attempt, mutual suspicion and ideology took the place of confidence and pragmatism. Although President Johnson tried initially to capitalize on Kennedy's close relations with Africa and keep Ghana tied to the West with a tactic of high-level visits and pressure, his lack of personal interest in African issues, and more in general his less sophisticated approach to Third World problems, fuelled Nkrumah's mistrust of America and of the CIA in particular. Thus, as Ghana became enmeshed in Cold-War dynamics beyond its control and the Congo Crisis flared up again, the Johnson administration opted for a joint US-British covert strategy to accelerate the downfall of the Nkrumah regime, which by 1964 was considered a liability for the Africa policy of both. While there is no evidence of a direct CIA involvement in the coup of February 1966 as in other cases of regime change in the Third World (Iran, Guatemala and Vietnam are cases in point), the United States, together with London, set the stage for the coup by financial and political pressure as well as intelligence activities.

During Nkrumah's "political kingdom" Ghana didn't have a complicated relationship only with Britain and the United States among the Western states; as we have seen in Chapter III, for the Federal Republic of Germany too it proved difficult to establish, in those politically overheated years, steady and straightforward relations with the government in Accra.

The Germans were quite unknown figures in Ghana until they started reciprocal diplomatic contacts. A part of Ghana, the Volta region (also Trans-Volta), had been part of Imperial Germany's Togoland until World War I; yet in the rest of the Gold Coast few people had come to see a German person, besides perhaps to a handful of missionaries and physicians. Yet as the country moved towards independence, both sides approached their first diplomatic intercourse with considerable enthusiasm.

While the West Germans saw in Ghana an economic entry point to Africa, as a market and as a source of raw materials, the latter were especially impressed by the achievements of the post-war “economic miracle” on the Rhine, and hoped the Germans would invest in the growing Ghanaian economy. There seemed to be the preconditions for a fruitful development of relations: already before independence, the Federal Republic was a major buyer of Ghanaian cocoa, and had established a consulate in Accra in 1956. However, during the independence ceremonies, and also afterwards, the British signaled their unease to the idea of an expanded commercial and political presence of their former enemy in what had been Britain’s “model colony” in Africa. The West Germans took the hint and curbed their activism in Ghana and also in Nigeria. The consulate in Accra was made an embassy three months after Ghana’s independence, but it was held by a chargé until October 1958. Economic relations developed at a slow pace too.

A change in Britain’s (and French) attitude in regard to a West German presence in Africa came about only as of 1959, as a consequence of increasing penetration by the Soviet Union south of the Sahara. The Ghanaians asked the Federal Republic to provide them with a banking expert for the head of the Bank of Ghana post and much to the latter’s surprise, the British urged the Germans to do so quickly, before the request was turned over to the Eastern bloc. The NATO countries had decided for a coordinated strategy in Africa, and the Federal Republic was thus enlisted to keep the “Ghanaian experiment” on the right track. In the summer of 1959 Ghana and West Germany signed their first agreement for economic and technical cooperation, which included suppliers’ credits and scholarships, while the Federal Republic expanded its technical assistance and vocational training programme.

The West Germans stepped into their role of “good Western soldiers” in Africa with firm motivation and best intents. However, their policy towards Africa came with two catches, deriving from Germany’s unresolved post-war political situation. The first, most important, was the issue of East Germany, which had established trade representations in Ghana and Guinea in 1959 following the Soviet Union’s

penetration. For the United States and Britain, the fact that Ghana established relations with Moscow was an unavoidable nuisance, but surely not the end of the world as long as this did not imply a significant Soviet military presence. For the Federal Republic, the possibility that any non-aligned country established relations with the GDR was a nightmare, as it would imply a denial of its official doctrine according to which East Germany actually didn't exist as state. Avoiding the establishment of official relations between any third states and the East German communist regime, by threats, sanctions and positive incentives, was one of the main pillars of the FRG's foreign policy in non-aligned nations until the early 1970s. As this dissertation along with other research has showed, however, the issue of the GDR exposed the Federal Republic to the risk of blackmailing, and soured the relations with Ghana until Nkrumah's fall in 1966.

The second catch in West Germany's approach to Africa, also related to its post-war political status, was the forced alignment it had to keep with the colonial powers on the one hand, which were its partners in Europe, and with the United States on the other. While the Germans had no recent colonial past, and were therefore free to approach the Third World without a negative postcolonial heritage, they could not speak out against colonialism and imperialism as the Africans hoped they would, and as their rivals from East Germany were free to do instead. Especially in countries with Marxist tendencies like Ghana, committed to anti-imperialism, anti-racialism, and showing a marked pan-African sensitivity, Bonn's political influence was therefore limited.

As for Britain and the United States, Ghana's shift to the left came as a shock to Bonn. The East Germans, who had established with their trade delegation a *de facto* embassy in Accra engaged in propaganda activities, tried to seize the opportunity to improve their political status, and leaked anti-FRG stories to the Ghanaian press in order to undermine Bonn's credibility. The Federal Republic backpedalled on the implementation of a capital aid programme for Ghana, and waited for the Americans to give the green light to the Volta scheme to resume their own negotiations. In the

meantime the ambassador in Accra risked creating a diplomatic incident when he tried to channel funds to elements of the opposition who tried to topple Nkrumah's regime. The steadiest link between the two countries remained trade: the FRG even surpassed the United States and Britain as purchaser of Ghanaian cocoa in some years. The stream of hard currency in exchange for cocoa was the Federal Republic's most notable contribution to keeping the "Ghana experiment" aligned with the West, and the best insurance against a recognition of the GDR by Ghana for itself.

As the VPR moved forward, in 1963 West Germany finally activated its capital aid programme for Ghana, which was destined to the construction of a bridge over the Volta. By this, and thanks to the employment of an ex-Nazi glider pilot who became a close associate of Nkrumah, the relations between the two countries improved and grew closer, although the FRG had to swallow the opening of a Ghanaian trade mission in East Berlin. When in 1964 the Federal Republic sent to Accra an Africa expert who enjoyed Nkrumah's confidence, it seemed as if it had found at last the right combination of elements to keep the East Germans and their propaganda at bay, even though Ghana was never willing to curb down the activities of the "socialist" Germans, who collaborated in the construction of Ghana's own brand of Marxist socialism. The FRG's commitment to Ghana had come, however, at a time when London and Washington were already pulling the rug out from under the "Ghana Experiment." This put Bonn against another dilemma, namely how to comply with the allies' signals, without giving the GDR the chance for further inroads. The coup d'état of 1966, which brought a very Bonn-friendly regime to power in Accra, freed the Federal Republic of one of the most awkward situations in Africa south of the Sahara.

So what does the story of Ghana's relations with the West at the time of Nkrumah, as seen from the perspective of Britain, America and West Germany, tell us at the end of the day? Considering the multifaceted nature of Ghana's foreign policy and Nkrumah's view of the world, this could seem the classic example of a story open to multiple interpretations. On the one hand the entire event can be legitimately read as

the failed attempt of a small state to transcend the boundaries of the given postcolonial power relations between the developing Global South and the industrialized North, and expand its own influence by the exercise of moral power rather than hard power, exploiting the rivalry between what were at the time the First and the Second World.<sup>1071</sup> Nevertheless, there are also many elements that can lead to view the entire story in the perspective of neocolonialism, which is a viewpoint that was suggested by Nkrumah himself in the first place, as he enjoyed portraying himself as a fierce adversary of imperialism and neocolonialism, although at the same time he did business with multinational capitalist corporations.<sup>1072</sup>

From whatever perspective one chooses to look at the matter, “influence” remains in any case a key concept, intended as the capacity of one government to direct the actions of another foreign government. Nkrumah sought to convince, in one way or another, the industrialized countries of the North, whether capitalist or communist, to invest in Ghana’s economy, provide capital aid and offer better trade conditions, i.e. buy more Ghanaian produce at a more stable, more equitable price. Moreover, Ghana’s government tried to influence the policy towards Africa of the great powers, especially Britain’s; to bring about a coexistence between the two blocs, as well as a negotiated solution of Cold War crises such as Vietnam and Berlin; and to promote global disarmament.

These were all legitimate and even noble aims, but the means employed by Ghana’s militant diplomacy, such as vociferous denunciation, propaganda, pressure, and tactical alliances often backfired and brought little results but bringing up public opinion, press, and decision-makers against Ghana. The failure of Nkrumah’s pan-Africanism cost the country its role as key to the continent; Nkrumah refused though to see this loss of status, and slipped towards the abyss.

For Britain, the issue of influence was phrased in more defensive terms. The “Ghana Experiment” was part of the effort to preserve “postcolonial influence” in the wake of the transformation of the Empire into the Commonwealth. “By meeting

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<sup>1071</sup> Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*.

<sup>1072</sup> Cf. Nimako, “Nkrumah, African Awakening and Neo-Colonialism.”

rather than opposing, nationalist demands,” as they had done in the Gold Coast until 1957, “it was expected that developments in the colonies could be channelled along moderate lines and reserves of goodwill toward Britain could be built up.”<sup>1073</sup> Once they had realized that in the case of Ghana the maintaining of this goodwill reserve implied the disbursement of significant amounts of money and course changes for their policy towards Africa, the British brought to bear whatever they considered useful to uphold their declining influence, such as the Queen’s visit, military cooperation, the Commonwealth, or the still lively cultural ties. They succeeded in cultivating ample reserves of goodwill for Britain in large strata of Ghanaian society, such as the middle class, the intelligentsia, the armed and police forces, but these were increasingly powerless forces in the last years of the CPP regime, while Nkrumah himself showed his British-friendly face only on the occasion of the Commonwealth conferences.

In 1964, it dawned on London that the experiment in Ghana had gone definitely awry from the political point of view, while the share of Britain in Ghana’s trade relations kept falling. It was therefore chosen to start a joint programme with the United States to accelerate the fall of the regime. In doing this, the British did not confine themselves to merely “tacitly approving” a plan prepared by the CIA, but actively participated, though always keeping in mind possible repercussions on their investments, in the undermining of the CPP’s power in the interior and abroad.<sup>1074</sup>

In order to uphold their postcolonial influence, the British invited the United States to join in the effort to keep Ghana West-friendly, and had even to concede inroads to their historical enemies and present economic competitors from Germany. The Americans had no special vested interests in Africa, despite what Nkrumah thought about the activities of the “tentacular” monopoly capitalism. Their interest stemmed essentially from the risk, which seemed at times concrete in the early 1960s and late 1970s, that the Soviet Union or China were about to gain significant footholds, which could become potential strategic threats.

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<sup>1073</sup> White, *Decolonisation*, p. 35.

<sup>1074</sup> Cf. Nimako, “Nkrumah, African Awakening and Neo-Colonialism,” p. 67.

Kennedy earnestly sympathized with the Africans' aspirations but was not always straightforward in his attitude, as we have seen. The Volta scheme was the great investment the United States did on Ghana's (and Africa's) non-alignment, and the foremost instrument of influence on Nkrumah. However, at least in the short term, it failed to reach its objective. Once the VRP was sealed off and sheltered from political turbulences, the Americans pulled out from Ghana, which they considered a fellow-traveller of Moscow, and waited for their destabilization plan to bear fruits. Whether the case of Ghana might be seen therefore as sign of the failure to establish a successful informal Anglo-American hegemony, or instead as an example of efficient cooperation between the former colonial power and the new global superpower to uphold the anti-communist order, depends on the eye of the beholder.

Federal Germany had an indirect role in the "Ghana Experiment," yet also surprisingly concrete interests to defend in Ghana, which contrasts with the self-image they tried to convey of their presence in Africa. Encouraged by the credit incentives and guarantees provided by the Federal Government, West Germany's exports to Ghana were on the rise during Nkrumah's period, despite the import-substitution and protectionist policies adopted by the Ghana government to promote industrialization and save currency.<sup>1075</sup> Although the Federal Republic did not take part in the VRP, the British looked with unease at the growing activities of industrial groups from West Germany in Ghana, while Britain kept losing ground on the commercial side in favour of European, American and Asian competitors.

Ghana's experience, taking into consideration also the story of the Volta dam project, seems therefore to confirm that the "real beneficiaries of decolonisation were not established British firms but expanding American, German and Japanese transnationals."<sup>1076</sup> On the other hand, the Germans were tied to Ghana by their 'brotherly' clinch with the Germans from the other side of the Wall. This had a distorting effect on the aid policy of the Federal Republic. While they withheld considerable sums of capital aid for Ghana in the early 1960s to sanction Nkrumah

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<sup>1075</sup> Cf. Lorenzini, *Due Germanie in Africa*, p. 185 ff.

<sup>1076</sup> White, *Decolonisation*, p. 42



for his outspokenness on the partition of Germany and the issue of Berlin, preferring to support their own former “model colony” Togo, as of 1963, when London and Washington were already trimming their sails in regard to the CPP government, they encouraged investments and provided technical aid to avoid a backlash for their Germany policy.

Although the significance of Nkrumah’s legacy to his country, to Africa and to the pan-African movement cannot be disputed, the question of “what went wrong” in Nkrumah’s Ghana keeps scholars busy until our days.<sup>1077</sup> As with other aspects of his foreign policy, Nkrumah achieved mixed results with his brinkmanship approach, by which he tried to surprise the great economic and political powers and play them off against each other. Most of his African colleagues chose to attach themselves to a protecting extra-African power as a best means for survival in the harsh postcolonial environment.<sup>1078</sup> He instead opted for non-alignment, but was not careful enough, and finished up mistrusted by both sides, as well as by many of the other African heads of state. Probably, he preferred to be remembered as a glorious martyr of pan-African nationalism, fallen in the fight against neocolonialism, rather than as one of Africa’s many leaders turned corrupt autocrats, unwilling to relinquish their power.

As the intent of this study was not to provide an overall reassessment of Nkrumah’s experience, I shall not attempt to explore this in further detail. From the evidence I have presented here, however, I deem it clear enough that this is a question that should concern by no means only the field of African studies and the history of pan-Africanism, but also all those who try to understand how the industrialized, developed world approached the relations with the developing nations of the Global South in the post-war period.

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<sup>1077</sup> Nimako, “Nkrumah, African Awakening and Neo-Colonialism,” p. 55.

<sup>1078</sup> Clapham, Christopher. *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

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